

# MASS FATALITY PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT RESOURCES For Local Health Departments

The role of public health in a mass fatality event is not as clearly defined as other community members who participate in this type of response. Rather, local health departments (LHDs) play a part in the larger community response as defined by the needs of the jurisdiction and the capacity of the health department to assist in the larger community response whether it be short- or long-term assistance with available programming. Being an active participant in community planning and willingness to assist as appropriate, will ensure this capability is met in the LHD.

## Recommended Planning Considerations

The plan demonstrates a concept of operations for mass fatality management by addressing the following items listed:

- What would activate the Mass Fatality Plan in the community.
- Who would begin the process to notify partners to activate the response.
- Staff roles and responsibilities as related to [ESF 8: Public Health and Medical Services](#) that include a detailed description of all responder roles by discipline in managing mass fatalities for the local jurisdiction. (Other roles/persons with complimentary authorities (i.e. role of the medical examiner, role of emergency management, etc.)
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- Outline of a general Incident Command System (ICS) structure for response activities by discipline to support the jurisdiction, if it would differ from other types of responses.
- LHD identifies potential support needed for families and community members through the public health department structure that could support a family assistance center (FAC). Ensure families and community members receive necessary support during a mass fatality response in the FAC (i.e., health department programs such as Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), Veteran Services and Area on Aging support if located in the LHD structure, Children Special Health Care Needs, death certificate requirements/access, etc.)
- Identify and establish protocols specific to LHD support in a mass fatality event to include development and implementation of procedures for mass fatality management that support programming that will be provided out of the office to support the medical examiner (ME) as needed. (This should be a discussion prior to a mass fatality event with the ME, emergency management (EM) or other potential lead partners to identify possible activities or actions the LHD can assist with (i.e. to insert within the plan a statement that identifies how the LHD will support the ME office to maintain and issue certified copies of death certificates, how EM perceives the potential for assistance at the FAC, etc.).



- If there is a role for the LHD, the plan should also include:
  - How the deceased are processed and stored during a mass fatality incident, including roles of the lead agency and any support roles assisting in this endeavor.
  - How death certificates and other vital records will be handled during emergencies that involve mass fatalities.
  - Potential roles in FAC activities (coordinator for the jurisdictional plan strategies, yearly reviewer at local emergency preparedness coordinator meetings with the jurisdictional partners, lead agency for coordination at FAC, etc.).

## Training and Exercising

### Training Resources:

These resources provide training and education in the Continuity of Operations (COOP) planning process.

- AWR-232: [Mass Fatality Planning and Response for Rural Communities](#) (Rural Domestic Preparedness Consortium).

Additional in person and online education and training is available through [FEMA](#) and [MI-TRAIN](#).

### Exercising Plans:

Effective emergency planning gains enhanced reliability through the practice of exercises. Exercises play a crucial role in preparedness by allowing stakeholders to rigorously test and validate their plans and capabilities. This process not only helps identify any existing capability gaps but also highlights areas that require improvement. The resources provided in this document serve as valuable tools for developing plans and offer templates that facilitate regular exercises for both COOP and recovery plans. By consistently utilizing these resources, organizations can strengthen readiness and resilience in the face of unexpected events.

- The [Homeland Security Exercise and Evaluation Program \(HSEEP\)](#) provides a set of guiding principles for exercise programs, as well as a common approach to exercise program management, design and development, conduct, evaluation and improvement planning. Exercises are a key component of national preparedness. They provide elected and appointed officials and stakeholders from across the whole community with the opportunity to shape planning, assess and validate capabilities and address areas for improvement.

## Templates and Examples

- [Managing Mass Fatalities: A Toolkit for Planning](#). Santa Clara County Public Health Department
- [All Hazards Mass Fatality Management Plan](#). Public Health Seattle and King County
- [Mass Fatality Plan](#). NAACHO
- [Mass Fatalities Incident Plan](#). State of Ohio

## Additional Resources and Other Templates

- [Fatality Management Resources](#). State of Michigan (includes the MDHHS Fatality Management Plan and other resources)
- [Mass Fatality Resources](#). National Association of Medical Examiners