

Mass Fatality Activation Plan Summary

In the event of an incident occurring in New Mexico involving mass fatalities, the county or city Emergency Manager involved would take one of two steps:

- Notify the Department of Homeland Security and Emergency Management (DHSEM) watch officer or the State Emergency Operations Center (SEOC), if it is activated, that there have been fatalities, and the State EOC would then contact the New Mexico Department of Health (NMDOH) Emergency Operations Center Representative (EOCR) and the Secretary of NMDOH. In turn, NMDOH would contact the state Office of the Medical Investigator to begin implementation of the 2012 Fatality Management Plan (MFP) and/or
- Would activate the OMI using the current framework for all reported deaths. This framework would start by contacting the OMI through the local 911 dispatch center. An alternative would be to contact the OMI Central Office (505 272-3053 or 1 800-432-5239).

The OMI may also become aware of a mass fatality incident (MFI) from the local first responder at the incident site, from the media, or other emergency notification system. The OMI contact will notify the Chief Medical Examiner (Chief) or his designated on-call representative as soon as there is a known or suspected MFI. The Chief will be responsible for the MFP activation and management and may appoint a Mass Fatality Incident Commander (Commander).

In some instances of a MFI, the SEOC will be activated. In that situation, a representative of the OMI appointed by the Chief will report to the New Mexico State Emergency Operations Center. The Chief will report to the Operations Section Chief during the period of the MFP activation, along with the NMDOH EOCR. The NMDOH EOCR will keep in continuous contact with the Secretary of NMDOH, and the Secretary, at her discretion, may activate the NMDOH Department Operations Center (DOC).

If the Governor of the State of New Mexico has declared a state of public health emergency, the OMI will follow the New Mexico Statutes (12-10A-5 and 12-10A-6.C) passed by the New Mexico Legislature in 2003 and will first consult with the Secretary of the Department of Health (NMDOH), the Secretary of the Department of Public Safety (DPS), and the Director and the Chairman of the Board of Thanatopractice in order to implement and enforce measures to provide for the safe disposal of human remains.

When the OMI becomes aware of an incident that may require activation of the MFP, the Chief, in concert with the Secretary of the NMDOH, will evaluate the incident to determine:

- 1) Jurisdiction over the incident
- 2) Potential or real number and location of remains
- 3) Condition of the bodies
- 4) Potential number of remains for autopsy
- 5) Level of difficulty in recovery
- 6) Types and numbers of personnel and equipment needed
- 7) Accessibility of the incident site
- 8) Possible biological, chemical, physical or radiological hazards
- 9) Level of personal protective equipment needed
- 10) Staffing needs

The Chief will then make a determination of the activation level of the plan. The Chief may alter the level of the response based on changing information or resources. The levels of response are:

- 1) Level 3 Response (Local) An incident deemed by the local Field Deputy Medical Investigator (FDMI) as significant or high profile enough as to draw an unusual amount of media attention or outside agency response. However, the number and type of incident fatalities are within the capability of the resources (FDMI availability, transportation and storage capability, equipment, etc.) available for the county in which the incident occurred. The NMSEOC may or may not be activated. An example would be a natural disaster with few fatalities.
 - a. Notification should be made to the central office on-call or on-duty supervisor and pathologist via the on-duty central office investigator for determination of additional notification or resource activation. The Chief may activate the MFP if the incident requires additional resources or the response of specialized personnel. This level of activation of the MFP will usually be managed by sending specialized personnel to the scene of the incident to assist the FDMI and by coordination of transportation of the fatalities to the central office.
- 2) Level 2 (Regional)
 - a. An incident deemed not within the capability of the resources available for the county in which the incident occurred. However, it can be handled appropriately with the assistance of the resources of the surrounding counties.
 - b. The NMSEOC may or may not be activated.
 - c. Notification should be made to the central office on-call or on-duty supervisor and pathologist via the on-duty central office investigator for determination of additional notification or resource activation. The Chief will activate the MFP to provide additional resources and personnel to manage the incident. This level of activation can usually be managed by sending additional resources and personnel to the scene of the incident to assist in recovery and investigation, possible temporary storage of remains, and transportation of fatalities. However, the number of fatalities would not be beyond the capabilities of the resources of the central office.
- 3) Level 1 (State or higher)
 - a. An incident deemed not within the capability of the resources available for the county in which the incident occurred and cannot be handled with the assistance resources of the surrounding counties or a declared disaster with large quantities of known, suspected, or anticipated deaths.
 - a. The NMSEOC will probably be activated.
 - b. After notification the Chief will activate the MFP and appoint the Commander.

The MFP is based on Incident Command System (ICS) core concepts and organizational processes. It is designed to work within the NMSEOC and the NIMS. It is also adaptable for any size of MFI and can be expanded or contracted as need arises. The following organizational chart highlights the key organizational structure of the MFP.

The Commander, in concert with the Secretary of the NMDOH, may request assistance from state and federal agencies as necessary. Federal assistance may be sought by the Governor through the Regional FEMA Administrator as per the Stafford Act requesting the Presidential declaration of a disaster.

The Commander, in concert with the NMDOH Secretary, will determine when to deactivate the plan.