

## Charleston County Coroner's Office Policy #53

**Title:** Mass Fatality Plan

**Page:** 1 of 19

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**Reviewed:**

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### 53.1 POLICY

A. To provide for the coordination of emergency service efforts in the event of a mass fatality incident in Charleston County. The purpose of this Mass Fatality Plan is to establish pre-planning and response guidelines for coordination between organizations to facilitate the effectiveness of a response to such as incident.

#### B. Authority

1. Charleston County Emergency Operations plan
2. South Carolina Emergency Operations Plan
3. South Carolina Code of Laws Title 17 Chapters 5 & 7
4. Federal Response Plan
5. Code of Federal Regulations 1910.1030 of Title 29

#### C. Organization (primary and support agencies)

1. See Charleston County Coroner's Office Organizational Chart, Attachment 1
2. The Charleston County Coroner, having jurisdiction and authority, is responsible for implementing and coordinating the Mass Fatality Plan.
3. Local Government
  - I. Charleston County Coroner's Office
  - II. Emergency Management Department (EMD)
  - III. Charleston County/Municipal Fire Departments
  - IV. Charleston County Sheriff's Department
  - V. Municipal Police Departments
  - VI. Charleston County EMS/Rescue Squad
  - VII. Charleston County Consolidated Dispatch Center
  - VIII. Charleston County Council Committee on Public Safety

## Mass Fatality Plan

### 4. State Government

- I. S.C. Emergency Management Division
- II. S.C. Department of Health and Environmental Control
- III. S.C. State Emergency Response Commission
- IV. S.C. Coroner's Association

### 5. Federal Government

- I. Disaster Mortuary Operational Response Team (DMORT)
- II. Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI)
- III. Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms & Explosives (ATF)
- IV. Joint Base Charleston Search & Recovery Team
- V. National Transportation Safety Board
- VI. FEMA Region National Guard Fatality Search & Recovery Team (FSRT)
- VII. National Guard CBRNE-Enhanced Ready Force Package (CERF-P)
- VIII. Department of State
- IX. Department of Defense: USCG

### 6. International

- I. Interpol
- II. Consulates

### D. Objectives

- 1. To describe operational concepts, organization and support systems required to implement the plan.
- 2. Identify authority, responsibilities, and actions of agencies necessary to manage a mass fatality incident
- 3. Establish an operational structure that has the ability to function within Charleston County.
- 4. Establish lines of authority and management of a mass fatality incident

## 53.2 SITUATION

- A. A mass fatality is any event that produces more fatalities than can be handled using local resources.
- B. Mass fatality incidents create a unique challenge to public safety as well as the local health care system.
- C. A disaster of such magnitude that would create mass fatalities may be beyond the immediate capability of the community's ability to respond without the implementation of the Mass Fatality Plan.
- D. Local law enforcement agencies, Emergency Medical Service (EMS), and fire service agencies will be the first units to respond to a mass fatality incident. Local healthcare facilities will be required to provide treatment to the surviving victims, and in the case of mass fatalities, a temporary morgue system may be implemented under the direction of the Charleston County Coroner.
- E. Residents and visitors to the area will inevitably look to local officials for information regarding what has occurred and what actions are being taken.

## Mass Fatality Plan

### 53.3 MISSION

To provide a well-organized emergency response and to rapidly mobilize and employ, in a coordinated effort, all necessary resources in the event of a mass fatality incident.

1. Establish Standard Operating Procedures (SOP).
2. Establish guidance for those agencies responding to mass fatality incidents.
3. Develop a concept of operations that clearly defines the roles and responsibilities of all agencies within Charleston County.
4. Assign specific functional responsibilities to appropriate departments and agencies and identify the actions that these departments and agencies will take in the overall response to a mass fatality incident in coordination with state and federal agencies.

### 53.4 CONCEPT OF OPERATIONS

Life cycle of a mass fatality incident (Overview not inclusive):

1. Initial reporting of the incident.
2. Public safety/first responders arrive on scene.
3. Casualties are sorted, and triaged.
4. Resource demands are identified and prioritized.
5. Transportation needs are identified and prioritized.
6. Casualties are transported for treatment to appropriate health care facilities.
7. The deceased remains in place for proper documentation, identification, and recovery.
8. Final report of the mass fatality incident prepared.

### 53.5 SCOPE

- A. Geographic Factors - This plan is concerned with mass fatalities incidents that occur within the County of Charleston. Response to other communities will be at the discretion of county officials as may be available once requested.
- B. Mass Fatality – An incident in which the number of fatalities is such a magnitude that is beyond the immediate capacity of the community's ability to respond without the implementation of the Mass Fatality Plan.
- C. Declaration- the Charleston County Coroner is the official with the authority to declare a mass fatality incident.

### 53.6 INCIDENT CONSIDERATIONS

- A. Three (3) major considerations may dictate the type and extent of response to a Mass Fatality Incident:
  1. The level of technical expertise required to mitigate the incident.
  2. The extent of local, county, state, and federal government involvement.
  3. The extent of injuries/deaths.

### 53.7 PERSONNEL ROLES, LINES OF AUTHORITY AND COMMUNICATION

## Mass Fatality Plan

- A. This function is perhaps the most critical for ensuring a successful operation. A team approach for command and control must be used for response. In most mass fatality incidents, the jurisdictional fire department will be on scene first and will be the initial Incident Commander. Incident Command can be transferred, or a Unified Command established as the incident evolves or as the situation dictates. If questions or conflicts arise within the command and control function, the Coroner will resolve.
- B. All responding departments of local government must be prepared to interface with volunteer, private, state, and federal counterparts at both the incident site and the EOC. The EOC, when activated, will be the command and control center for the coordination of resource support. The operational command will be maintained at the incident site. Immediate command and control must be established to ensure that control measures are implemented for life safety and evidence preservation.
- C. Response to a mass fatality incident will typically involve multiple jurisdictions and levels of government. These situations will be managed under a Unified Command System. Members of the Unified Command are jointly responsible for the development of objectives, priorities, and overall strategy to effectively address the situation. The Unified Command System will be structured very similar to the Incident Command System already in place.
- D. All agencies involved in the emergency response will report to one Incident Command Post and follow one Incident Action Plan. The Operations Section Chief, who is designated by the Unified Command, will be responsible for the implementation of the plan. A Joint Information Center may be composed of Public Information Officers from essentially the same organizations that are represented in the Unified Command.

### 53.8 AGENCY RESPONSIBILITIES

- A. Law Enforcement
  - 1. Law Enforcement will ensure public safety and facilitate response and recovery activities, security, and access control measures in and around the incident site, implemented immediately by first responders. The area will be quickly evaluated in terms of public health and safety to identify the need to implement protective actions, as well as the use of protective equipment by response personnel entering the area in order to conduct lifesaving activities. Only if suspected or it is determined that the incident is criminal in nature, law enforcement will begin operations to ensure that the crime scene is preserved and the scene is safe for emergency responder actions.
  - 2. Law Enforcement is responsible for security at the following locations:
    - I. Incident site, establishing inner and outer perimeters.
    - II. Mass Fatality Morgue
    - III. Family Assistance Center
    - IV. Joint Information Center
    - V. Personnel Effects Warehouse
    - VI. Logistical Support Center
    - VII. Hospitals, if requested

# Mass Fatality Plan

## VIII. Incident Command Site

### IX. Charleston County Coroner's Office, if requested

#### 3. Law Enforcement will be conducting investigations at the following locations:

- I. Incident site
- II. Mass Fatality Morgue
- III. Personal Effects Warehouse
- IV. Hospitals
- V. Various other locations, as appropriate

#### 4. Law Enforcement may be asked to assist the Coroner with the following:

- I. Evidence collection
- II. Forensic Photography
- III. Identification of decedents and/or personal effects
- IV. Death Notifications

## B. Fire Service

1. The Fire service's primary responsibility in a mass fatality incident is fire suppression and hazardous materials identification.
2. Search and Rescue operations will be implemented as directed by each department's procedures and under the direction of the Incident Commander.
3. In the event of a hazardous materials incident, the HazMat Team will be utilized to determine the degree of the hazard and establish hot zones as indicated.
4. Pending the arrival of EMS, the on-scene fire department will provide medical triage and treatment as required.
5. Fire service responders at the scene of a potential criminal act should not collect or move any evidence unless for the purpose of life-saving measures.

## C. Emergency Medical Service

1. In a mass casualty incident Charleston County EMS has the lead responsibility for providing medical treatment to the injured, stabilizing the seriously injured, triaging and transporting victims to the hospital on a priority basis.
2. An EMS supervisor will make the decision to activate the Mass Casualty Plan. The plan may be activated before an on-scene EMS confirmation, in cases where it is relatively certain there will be large numbers of patients.
3. EMS will determine the need for mutual aid. If mutual aid is needed, the EMS Director, or their designee, will make the request.
4. EMS has the responsibility for establishing the following:
  - I. Medical Command Documentation

## Mass Fatality Plan

- II. Medical Coordination
- III. Medical Division Supervisor
- IV. Triage Unit Leader
- V. Medical Transportation Unit Leader
- VI. Medical Staging Unit Leader

### D. Emergency Management

1. Activate the EOC to gather information about the incident, and serve as a point of contact for affected departments and agencies. Establish communication links, and support deployment of appropriate local and state resources.
2. Mobilize, deploy, and coordinate resources to the impacted area to assist in lifesaving and life protection efforts. Coordinates additional support resources.
3. May serve as Logistics Section Chief on-scene in support of the incident.
4. Provide, if requested, a Mobile Incident Command Post or assist in establishing a facility to serve as the Command Post for onsite coordination and command activities.
5. Activate Memorandums of Understanding or Vendors for requests for the following:
  - I. Mass Feeding
  - II. Sanitary
  - III. Refrigerated Vehicles
  - IV. Accommodations for the Family Assistance Center(s)
  - V. Various Equipment Agreements as Required
6. Responsible for the coordination of recovery efforts to the community after the incident is over.

### E. Charleston County Coroner

1. The Charleston County Coroner has the responsibility of activating the Mass Fatality Plan. The Coroner's Office is the lead agency for all decedent operations.
2. The Charleston County Coroner has the responsibility for coordinating all activities at the following locations:
  - I. Incident Site:
    - a. Medicolegal Death Investigations
    - b. Search and Recovery of deceased
  - II. Morgue:
    - a. Administration
    - b. Receiving
    - c. Initial holding

## Mass Fatality Plan

- d. Personal effects
- e. Dental
- f. Autopsy
- g. Final holding
- h. Photography
- i. Fingerprinting/foot printing
- j. Radiology
- k. Anthropology
- l. Aftercare
- m. Release

### III. Family Assistance Center(s):

- a. Ante-Mortem information collection
- b. Death Notifications
- c. Disposition requests
- d. Daily briefings

### IV. Joint Information Center:

- a. Daily briefings

### V. Media Operations

- a. Emergency Management in coordination with the County Public Information Officer and the Joint Information Center will formulate news releases to be approved by the Unified Command and EOC Commander. Copies of all news releases will be provided by the Charleston County Public Information Officer located in the EOC. All releases related to fatalities will be compiled with information from the other agencies and released to the media following final approval from the Charleston County Coroner or his/her designee. The following should be included in all news releases:
  - 1. Focus on specific event-related information
  - 2. When possible, report positive information concerning emergency response efforts
  - 3. Practice rumor control
  - 4. Aim ongoing public information to increase awareness of hazards and proper response
- b. Release of decedent information
  - 1. The estimated number of decedents shall only be released to the media with approval by the Charleston County Coroner or their designee.
  - 2. The names of decedents shall only be released to the media by or with the approval of the Charleston County Coroner or their designee.
- c. Depend on the cooperation of the commercial media for information;

## Mass Fatality Plan

- i. A media official representing the Charleston County Coroner will remain at the Family Assistance Center with the victim's families.
- ii. A media official representing Charleston County will remain in the EOC.

### 53.9 DECEDENT OPERATIONS

A. This response is focused on properly handling decedents and human remains. The following is an outline of the Coroner's operations which may or may not be all inclusive

B. Notification and Response Strategy formulation (0-12 hrs.)

1. Coroner notified and advised of the following:

- I. Type of incident
- II. Location
- III. Estimated number of casualties and fatalities
- IV. Condition of human remains
- V. Demographics of decedents, if known
- VI. On-going response actions
- VII. Response agencies currently on the scene or en route
- VIII. Possible cause of the incident, if known

2. Coroner's Staff Notification/Request:

At this time, the Coroner will assess the incident to determine if their office has the ability to handle the incident without outside assistance. If the Coroner does not have the ability then it is at this time that the requests be made for additional assistance from state and/or federal agencies.

The Coroner, through the EOC, may request assistance from the South Carolina Coroner's Association. If the scope of the incident is beyond the capacity to be handled within the state then the Coroner may request, through the EOC, the assistance of DMORT.

3. Coroner Site Assessment:

Meet on scene with the Incident Commander to determine if the incident is stabilized and if not, establish a potential period. Assess the site to determine the number and condition of the human remains.

The Coroner will also be notified by local hospitals, of any individual who was transported to their facility, from the incident location and subsequently died at that facility.

4. Coroners Considerations:

- I. Establishment of a temporary morgue
- II. Location for a temporary morgue
- III. Deployment of refrigerated trailer owned and managed by the Charleston County Coroner's Office



## Mass Fatality Plan

- IV. Deployment of refrigerated trailers owned and managed by the South Carolina Coroner's Association
  - V. What other response actions by other agencies might occur concurrently with the Coroners operation;
    - a. A morgue administrator should manage morgue operations.
    - b. Search and recovery operations should be led and managed by the Coroner's Medicolegal Death Investigators.
    - c. Victim's advocates should manage the Family Assistance Center(s).
    - d. Logistical operations should be managed by Charleston County EOC.
    - e. Personal effects operations should be led and managed by evidence technicians from the local law enforcement agency in coordination with the Charleston County Coroner's Office
- C. Establishment of Operational Areas (12-24 hrs.)
- 1. Primary focus is:
    - I. Notification and recall of key personnel
    - II. Site assessment
    - III. Establishment of operations
  - 2. Specific Actions:
    - I. Lifesaving actions continue
    - II. Search and recovery of the deceased begins
    - III. Mass Fatality Incident Morgue is established if applicable
    - IV. Family Assistance Center is established
    - V. Local families begin to gather
    - VI. Remains arrive at the Mass Fatality Morgue
    - VII. Response briefings are conducted
    - VIII. Advance party of outside agencies begin to arrive
    - IX. Logistical support operations are established
- D. All Operational Areas are Up and Running (24-36 hrs.)
- 1. Primary focus is:
    - I. Search for and recovery of the deceased
    - II. Determine that all operations are fully functional
    - III. Overseeing the arrival of outside agencies
  - 2. Specific Actions:
    - I. Search and recovery continues
    - II. Mass fatality morgue established continues (many stations are operational)
    - III. Remains continue to arrive at the morgue
    - IV. Media briefings conducted
    - V. Families begin to arrive at the Family Assistance Center. They are interviewed, and detailed questionnaires are completed
    - VI. Family briefings are conducted
    - VII. Families who do not come to the site but have called authorities will be followed up with as appropriate
    - VIII. Main group of outside response begins to arrive
    - IX. Logistical operations continue

## Mass Fatality Plan

### E. Sustained Operations Search and Recovery (36 hrs.+).

#### 1. Primary focus is:

- I. Search for and recovery of the deceased
- II. Confirmation of identification of decedents
- III. Forensic autopsies/examinations as indicated
- IV. The sustainment of all operations

#### 2. Specific Actions:

- I. Search and recovery continues
- II. Mass Fatality Morgue is fully operational
- III. Remains continue to arrive at the morgue
- IV. Media briefings are conducted
- V. Family briefings are conducted
- VI. Family interviews are continued
- VII. Identification records continue to arrive
- VIII. Forensic autopsied/examinations begin
- IX. Identification of decedents begin
- X. Notification to decedent's next-of-kin begins
- XI. Continued gathering of identification data on all unidentified remains
- XII. Outside response agencies are fully operational
- XIII. Personal effects operations are established

### F. Sustained Morgue Operations-Release of the Deceased.

#### 1. Primary focus is:

- I. Winding down of search and recovery
- II. Increased tempo of confirmed decedent identifications and notifications
- III. Forensic autopsies/examinations
- IV. The sustainment of all operations

#### 2. Specific Actions:

- I. Search and recovery begins to wind down
- II. Mass Fatality Morgue is fully operational
- III. Deceased continue to arrive at the morgue
- IV. Media briefings continue
- V. Families are contacted and received information directly from the Coroner's Office personnel
- VI. Family Assistance Center operations begin to wind down
- VII. Forensic autopsies/examinations continue
- VIII. Identification records continue to arrive
- IX. Identification of the deceased continues
- X. Outside support continue operations
- XI. Notifications to families of positive identification continues
- XII. Families are asked to make disposition decisions and arrangements
- XIII. Deceased are released by the Coroner
- XIV. Personal effects operations continue

### G. Sustained Morgue Operations-Increased Numbers of Deceased Released.

#### 1. Primary focus is:

## Mass Fatality Plan

- I. The winding down or conclusion of search and recovery
- II. Increased numbers of identification and releases
- III. Increased tempo in the personal effects operations
- IV. The winding down of outside support operations
- V. Continual sustainment of ongoing operational areas

### 2. Specific Actions:

- I. Search and Recovery continues to wind down
- II. Mass fatality morgue is fully operational
- III. Remains continue to arrive at the morgue sporadically
- IV. Media briefings are conducted
- V. Individual and family briefings are conducted
- VI. Identification records continue to arrive
- VII. Identification of bodies continues
- VIII. Forensic autopsy/examinations continue
- IX. Outside support operations close
- X. Notifications of positive identifications continue
- XI. Families are asked to make disposition decisions and arrangements
- XII. Deceased are released by the Coroner's office
- XIII. Personal effects operations continue

## H. Final Release of Deceased and Cessation of Operations.

### 1. Primary focus is:

- I. The occasional receipt of remains
- II. Resolution of the most difficult identifications
- III. Increased release of the deceased

### 2. Specific Actions:

- I. Search and Recovery operations are closed
- II. Mass Fatality Morgue is winding down or has been transferred to the regular morgue
- III. Media briefings continue
- IV. Individual and group family briefings are continued
- V. Identification of the deceased continues
- VI. Notification to families continues
- VII. Deceased are released by the Coroner's Office
- VIII. Personal effects operations continue

## I. Final Actions, Completion of Incident Report.

### 1. Primary Focus is:

- I. The completion of all identifications.
- II. Final decisions regarding those who remain unidentified.
- III. Closing of all case reports.
- IV. Final inspection of the incident site to ensure that all remains have been recovered.

### 2. Specific Actions:

- I. Occasional media briefings are conducted

## Mass Fatality Plan

- II. Identification of the deceased is completed
- III. Notification to family members continues
- IV. Families are asked to make disposition decisions and arrangements
- V. Deceased are released from the coroner's office
- VI. Personal effects operations continue

### 53.10 SCENE MANAGEMENT

- A. Once the scene has been rendered safe and the last victim is transported to the hospital, recovery, and documentation of the deceased and incident location begins.
- B. The Charleston County Coroner's Office or their designee has the overall responsibility for mass fatality scene management.
- C. Responders entering the incident site should be briefed on what to expect. The responders should be advised if there are child victims. The responders should also be advised on the condition of the human remains.
- D. Law Enforcement will establish an inner and outer perimeter. The purpose is for the following:
  - 1. Responder safety
  - 2. Public safety
  - 3. Evidence preservation
- E. A designated ingress and egress route must be established. This may be one in the same or different locations depending on the incident. The purpose of this is to ensure that responders entering the incident scene are wearing the proper personal protective equipment; in addition, it provides security to the incident and responders. No responder should be allowed to enter the incident location without the designated personal protective equipment on. In addition, monitoring the ingress and egress points allows for the monitoring of evidence continuity.
  - 1. Responders may be exposed to blood and other body fluids during a mass fatality incident as well as other contaminants.
  - 2. Personal Protective Equipment (PPE): the level of PPE to be used at the incident location will be determined by the Unified Command in concurrence with the Coroner and Safety Officer. No responder will be allowed to enter the incident site without wearing the proper PPE.
  - 3. Search and recovery of the deceased: Depending on the incident type the search techniques may be different. The Unified Command in coordination with the Coroner will advise on the best search technique for the particular incident.
  - 4. Although search techniques differ depending on the type of incident, the search sequence remains standard among them. The following is a suggested search sequence:

## Mass Fatality Plan

- I. Document the entire scene, using both digital still photography, aerial photography and video.
- II. Establish perimeters around the debris field. The perimeter should be larger than the farthest piece of debris found.
- III. Assess the hazards of the incident site.
- IV. Search teams will be identified and composed of the following:
  - a. Team Leader - Law Enforcement, responsible for photographing the incident, note taking and obtaining coordinates with a GPS device. Law Enforcement is also responsible for the recovery of evidence and unassociated personal effects.
  - b. Recovery Personnel – EMS, Fire Service and others as designated by the Coroner. Recovery Personnel will be utilized at the discretion of the Charleston County Coroner in the recovery of the deceased. The Recovery Personnel are responsible for the placement of human remains into a human remains pouch. The Recovery Personnel carry the remains to the recovery staging area.
  - c. All Search Team members, tasked with only locating remains, will be in the proper PPE equipment prior to entering the incident site.
  - d. The Search Teams will be designated by using the letters of the alphabet starting with the letter “A”.
  - e. Human remains, fragments, and personal effects will be designated numerically starting with the number “1”.
  - f. An example of the above would be Team “A” locates 10 items; their designation would be A-1 through A-10. Team “B” locates 10 items; their designation would be B-1 through B-10, etc.
- V. It is imperative that the remains and the personal effects are handled/documentated properly. The following is a guideline for this process:
  - a. Take GPS reading of the human remains, fragment, or effect
  - b. Attach a tag (indicating group and item number) to the human remains, fragment, effects
  - c. Place a pin flag or marker in the ground or spray paint the number on the ground
  - d. Record the information in written notes
  - e. Place the item in a human remains pouch or plastic bag
  - f. Attached identification band to the remains as indicated
  - g. Write the alpha-numeric designation on the human remains pouch or plastic bag
  - h. Place the human remains pouch or plastic bag on transport litter
  - i. Re-photograph the area
  - j. Move remains to the recovery staging area
  - k. Continue with the search
- VI. When using refrigerated vehicles for the holding of human remains, ensure the vehicles do not have visible names or features by which they can be identified. Refrigerated vehicles must have metal floors as wooden floors cannot be decontaminated. Refrigerated vehicles containing human remains always move under law enforcement escort.

## Mass Fatality Plan

### 53.11 MASS FATALITY MORGUES

- A. Charleston County Coroner's Office has the overall responsibility for the management of the Mass Fatality Morgue(s).
- B. A Mass Fatality Morgue is the most resource intensive function. It is intensive in manpower requirements, in its logistical support requirements, and emotional toll.
- C. A mass fatality morgue includes the following stations. Each of these stations may not be required for a particular incident.
  - 1. Administration
  - 2. Receiving
  - 3. Initial holding
  - 4. Photography
  - 5. Personal effects
  - 6. Fingerprinting/Foot printing
  - 7. Dental
  - 8. Radiology
  - 9. Autopsy & examination
  - 10. Anthropology
  - 11. Final holding
  - 12. After care
  - 13. Release
- D. The following are suggestions in planning a mass fatality morgue site:
  - 1. Proximity to incident site
  - 2. Sufficient space to accommodate the various morgue stations
  - 3. Single story building, if multiple stories must have an elevator
  - 4. Good ventilation and lighting
  - 5. Ability to easily accommodate morgue refrigerated vehicles and transportation vehicles
  - 6. Electricity, water, and waste/water disposal
  - 7. Easily cleaned surfaces that meet OSHA requirements
- E. In the event a Mass Fatality Morgue is established it will require exceptional amounts of personnel. Assistance may be obtained through the State and Federal Government. The S.C. Coroner's Association may be activated as well as the Federal DMORT Region IV Team.

### 53.12 PERSONAL EFFECTS OPERATIONS

- A. Personal effects are considered to be items located on, carried by, or transported with an individual. In mass fatality incidents, the incident scene can be littered with thousands of personal effects.
- B. Personal effects have a significant meaning to surviving family members. These items may help in the identification of the deceased persons.

## Mass Fatality Plan

### C. There are two types of personal effects, associated and unassociated:

#### 1. Associated Effects:

Associated personal effects will be managed by the Charleston County Coroner's Office or their designee. Any items that are found on the remains should stay with them until they are removed at the mass fatality morgue site.

- I. Items that are on an individual at the time of recovery (i.e. clothing, jewelry, wallet)
- II. Items that are recovered near the body and have an identifying feature such as a name (i.e. wallet, purse and/or luggage with identifying information)

#### 2. Unassociated Personal Effects:

Unassociated personal effects will be documented and inventoried by the assigned law enforcement agency.

- I. Items which are not located on an individual
- II. Items that do not pose a name or any other identifying information

#### 3. Personal Effects Warehouse(s) have the following stations:

- I. Administration
- II. Receiving
- III. Storage
- IV. Processing
- V. Disposition
- VI. Destruction

#### 4. The following are considerations when establishing a personal effects warehouse:

- I. Long term availability of the facility
- II. Does the facility support OSHA regulations
- III. Controlled access
- IV. Basics of electricity, water, sewer, ventilation, and climate control.
- V. Single story building preferred, if multi-story must have an elevator

#### 5. All recovered unassociated personal effects should come to the receiving station. Here the items are checked to determine if: the item is a piece of evidence and/or ensure the item does not contain pieces of human remains.

#### 6. Processing of personal effects should be conducted in the following manner:

- I. Remove personal effects from the bag
- II. Check the items against the inventory, if any are missing notify a supervisor immediately
- III. Contaminated items should be decontaminated, if this is not possible they should be separated and marked for destruction
- IV. Items that are damaged and very dirty should have notations made. Be sensitive to the verbiage used
- V. Individual case numbers are made for each individual effect
- VI. Case number is attached to the personal effect
- VII. A photograph is taken, case number must be visible

## Mass Fatality Plan

- VIII. The personal effect is placed in a storage bag
  - IX. If the personal effects are part of an associated group, the individual bags should be placed in a large single bag or container
  - X. The personal effects are then taken to the controlled storage area
7. Disposition of associated personal effects may begin once the body they are associated with is identified and ready for release. Contact the Persons Eligible to Receive Effects (PERE's) and determine their desires. Carry out their desires per policy and applicable laws. Briefly explain the recovery process, if the personal effects were contaminated and could not be decontaminated and therefore destroyed.
8. Disposition of unassociated personal effects should begin after all unassociated effects have been processed. Once this is complete follow the following procedures:
- I. Contact persons eligible to receive effects to determine if they wish to participate in the unassociated effects process.
  - II. Provide all PERE's who wish to participate the availability to view all unassociated personal effects.
  - III. Resolve multiple claims for the same items.
    - a. Disposition can be accomplished using either a catalogue presentation or the laying out of items to be identified.
    - b. The notification process is the same as associated personal effects.
7. Destruction of personal effects should be carried out once all PERE's or survivors have had the opportunity to retrieve their personal effects and a Pre-determined storage period has elapsed. It is recommended that the destruction of personal effects be carried out via incineration.

### 53.13 FAMILY ASSISTANCE CENTERS

- A. *The jurisdictional law enforcement agency will have the overall responsibility for managing the Family Assistance Center.*
- B. The success of the incident will depend on how well the families were cared for.
- C. Family Assistance Inquiry Centers (0-48 Hours)
  - 1. Provide basic information
  - 2. Screen calls to determine the relationship if any to the victim(s)
  - 3. Gather information about the victim
  - 4. Gather return call information for further contact
- D. The Family Assistance Center will be staffed by call takers and trained volunteers per SC DHEC and ARC guidelines.



## Mass Fatality Plan

- E. The Family Assistance Center is a sanctuary for people who are experiencing the same fears and feelings. The Family Assistance Center provides a secure location where families can:
  - 1. Gather and wait for more information
  - 2. Be interviewed to collect ante-mortem information
  - 3. Receive information briefings
  - 4. Be advised on the positive identification of their relative(s). Receive official notification of death
  - 5. Make disposition arrangements for the deceased
  - 6. Meet with Grief Counselors
  - 7. Escape the media
- F. Staffing the Family Assistance Center should include the following:
  - 1. Law Enforcement, detectives to collect ante-mortem information
  - 2. Victim's Advocates
  - 3. Volunteers
  - 4. EMS, one unit should be assigned to the center.
  - 5. Representative from the Coroner's Office
  - 6. American Red Cross
  - 7. Department of Health and Environmental Control (DHEC)
  - 8. Salvation Army
  - 9. Chaplaincy

### 53.14 RECOVERY

- A. Charleston County Emergency Management has the overall responsibility for coordinating all recovery efforts.
- B. Once the lifesaving and investigation of the scene are completed and the area is considered safe, the area will be made accessible to property owners, insurance adjusters, media etc. However, access to the area may still be limited depending on the extent and nature of the damage sustained, general conditions of the area, and who is requesting access. Accessibility and re-entry policies are developed in cooperation with the appropriate local, state, and federal officials, to define who will be given access, whether escorts will be necessary, and what protective equipment will be required, if any, to enter the area. Methods to facilitate identification and accountability of emergency workers, media, insurance adjusters, and property owners will also be developed for safety and security purposes, utilizing some system of colored badges, name tags, arm bands, etc. Security personnel will be responsible for enforcing these policies and procedures as they are developed. Areas on site that pose a potential hazard or risk will be identified and cordoned off with the appropriate isolation and warning devices.

### 53.15 PLAN DEVELOPMENT AND MAINTENANCE

- A. General  
This Standard Operating Guide is the principle source of documentation concerning the

## Mass Fatality Plan

county's response to Mass Fatalities. Designated departments and agencies of county government have the responsibility for developing and maintaining this Guide. Overall coordination of this process will be performed by the Charleston County Corners Office.

### B. Maintenance and Improvement

The Coroners Office personnel revise the Mass Fatality Policy when:

- Conditions described in the current plan or sections of the current plan have changed;
- Changes are recommended through an after-action report process following an actual event or exercise;
- Necessary changes or revisions are discovered during annual policy review;
- Community and/or risk conditions change;
- New Federal, State or Local guidance is released.

Following an exercise or activation of the Mass Fatalities Policy, an after-action report should be completed with assistance from CCEMD to ensure that lessons learned are captured and that recommendations are integrated into an improvement plan.

This Plan will be reviewed annually in conjunction with standards set forth in the Charleston County EMD Strategic Plan.

# Mass Fatality Plan

## ATTACHMENT 1 – Organizational Chart

