

Executive Summary

This is an excerpt from the larger document titled, “2013 Regional Mass Fatality Functional Exercise and Disaster Mortuary Operations & Family Assistance Center Full-Scale Exercise.”

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The 2013 Urban Shield Functional and Full-Scale Exercise was conducted to evaluate the Regional Catastrophic Incident Mass Fatality Plan (MFP), which was developed with funding provided by the Regional Catastrophic Preparedness Grant Program (RCPGP). The overarching goal of the exercise was to identify the MFP’s strengths and areas of improvement during a response to a mass fatality incident. The exercise included a four-hour functional exercise conducted on the morning of October 26, 2013 and a full-scale component conducted during the afternoon of the same day. Functional exercise participants were presented with an exercise scenario that involved the collision of passenger and freight trains that resulted in the death of 150 passengers. The full-scale component leveraged the functional exercise scenario by exercising Disaster Mortuary Operations, including establishing and operating a family assistance center (FAC) and portable field morgue. Coroner, medical examiner, emergency management, public and mental health, and American Red Cross personnel from the counties of Alameda, Contra Costa, Marin, San Francisco, and San Mateo participated in the exercise.

Based on the exercise planning team’s deliberations, the following overarching objectives were developed for the 2013 Regional Mass Fatality Functional Exercise and Disaster Mortuary Operations & Family Assistance Center Full-Scale Exercise:

1. **Operational Coordination:** Assess the capability of participating agencies to develop an integrated response by gathering information from and sharing information with other activated Emergency Operations Centers (EOCs) to produce consistent information to EOC staff and senior decision makers in a timely manner in accordance with agency standard operating procedures (SOPs), the Regional Catastrophic Preparedness Grant Program (RCPGP), Regional Catastrophic Incident Mass Fatality Plan, and the Standardized Emergency Management System (SEMS).
2. **Public and Private Services and Resources:** Assess the capability of participating agencies to determine the need for and request resources to support field operations within the Operational Area (OA) and in support of regional incident response operations according to their SOPs, the RCPGP Regional Catastrophic Incident Mass Fatality Plan, RCPGP Regional Catastrophic Earthquake Logistics Response Plan, and SEMS.
3. **Public Information and Warning:** Assess the capability of participating agencies to disseminate prompt, coordinated, clear, specific, accurate, and actionable emergency public information and warnings for the general population and persons with disabilities or access and functional needs (AFN) population’s Communication, Medical, Independence, Supervision, and Transportation (C-MIST) needs in a timely manner in accordance with agency protocols and the *RCPGP Regional Catastrophic Incident Mass Fatality Plan*.
4. **Fatality Management Services:** Assess the capability of participating agencies to conduct operations in response to a mass fatality incident in accordance with their SOPs and the *RCPGP Regional Catastrophic Incident Mass Fatality Plan*.

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5. **Situational Assessment:** Assess the capability of participating agencies to gather information from field units, develop situational status reports for each OA EOC, and to transmit them to the Regional Emergency Operations Center (REOC) according to OA EOC SOPs, the *RCPGP Regional Catastrophic Incident Mass Fatality Plan*, and SEMS.

The purpose of this report is to analyze exercise results, identify strengths to be maintained and built upon, identify potential areas for further improvement, and support development of corrective actions.

The major strengths identified during this exercise are as follows:

- In accordance with the *San Francisco Bay Area Regional Emergency Coordination Plan - Base Plan*, the California Governor’s Office of Emergency Services (Cal OES) - Coastal Region simulated a Regional Coordination Group Conference Call. Representatives from the Contra Costa, San Mateo, and San Francisco OAs participated in the call to gather and share information that enhanced regional decision making, fostered an integrated response, and supported the beginnings of a common operating picture. Key situation status information and current response operations information was provided to all conference call participants. Although only one teleconference was conducted during the exercise, the Cal OES representative, simulating the REOC Director, stated, that during a real world event, additional Regional Coordination Group Conference calls would be conducted to facilitate information sharing and collaboration. Regional coroner and emergency management personnel were able to plan for and attain the staffing and equipment necessary to establish and operate a family assistance center (FAC) and Portable Field Morgue to support the full-scale exercise component of the exercise.
- Regional PIO efforts were enhanced through the establishment of the Contra Costa County OA EOC virtual and physical Joint Information Center (JIC). The public information effort consisted of six field PIOs and several EOC PIOs relaying, analyzing, and disseminating information to the public and to other regional PIOs. EOC PIOs coordinated information coming from field PIOs and the on-scene Close Circuit Television (CCTV) camera crews. Moreover, the JIC established roles for each PIO and set up a manual system of tracking requests for information and collection where incoming calls, requests for information from the media, and very important person (VIP) issues were recorded and shared with PIOs throughout the region.
- Coroner personnel were able to identify the key operational elements required to establish and operate a family assistance center (FAC) and Portable Field Morgue to support the FSE component of the exercise.
- Region II Coordinator maintained situational awareness on deployed mutual aid resources for the duration of the incident. Unclear status of resources prompted discussion and phone calls from the region to reduce uncertainty.

Throughout the exercise, several opportunities for improvement were identified. The primary areas for improvement are as follows:

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- The Bay Area lacks a regional capability to respond to information disseminated via social media effectively.
 - **Corrective Action: Consider the development of a Bay Area Social Media Plan.**
- Key situational awareness information was not provided to OAs providing Coroner Mutual Aid.
 - **Corrective Action: Define the information exchange requirements of agencies participating in a mass fatality incident.**
- Coroner and Medical Examiner staff throughout the Bay Area is generally not familiar with the command, control, and operational components of the Regional Catastrophic Incident Mass Fatality Plan.
 - **Corrective Action: Provide coroner and ME personnel with training on the Regional Catastrophic Incident Mass Fatality Plan.**

The 2013 Regional Mass Fatality Functional Exercise and Disaster Mortuary Operations & Family Assistance Center Full-Scale Exercise was a success in that it allowed participants to demonstrate the decisions and actions necessary to successfully respond and recover from a mass fatality incident. While the exercise identified areas that can be improved, the participating organizations possess several strengths that were identified and can be built upon.