

## **MI-MORT Meeting Minutes**

**April 10, 2020**

**1:00 p.m. – 2:00 p.m.**

Attendance: Keisha Dixon, Rick Drummer, Dr. Todd Fenton, Hanna Friedlander, Dr. David Foran, Cana Garrison, Bob Gilbert, Jessica Gould, Patti Lyons, Dr. Brian Murphy, Katie Puskar, Dr. Maureen Schaefer, Tim Schramm, Roger Simpson, Jennifer Lixey Terrill, Ryan Wilkinson.

### **COVID-19 Overview**

- Jessica Gould provide an update on the response and, said so far, locals and hospitals were doing a great job finding their own resources, such as cold storage units for remains.
- Jessica is beginning to get requests requesting remains storage assistance from hospitals and Public Health agencies with storage and pre-permissions moving remains.
- A few hospitals, such as Beaumont, Sinai Grace, and Detroit Medical Center are running out of cold storage space. There are also other facilities across the state that need remains storage.
- DTMB no longer has refrigerated trucks available.
- Jessica said this discussion is FYI only and not for the public. Within the last 36 hours, Detroit has requested the state assist with remains storage.
- Jessica Gould and Jennifer Lixey Terrill have been discussing cold storage options and located a cold storage facility in Livonia.
  - A contract was then drafted.
  - This facility can store up to 7,500 remains.
  - Tim Schramm and Jessica Gould plan to do a site visit this afternoon to view the facilities to see if it will work.
  - The facility has shelving and is an easy commute from Detroit, downriver area and Flint.
  - Flint has not surged yet.
    - Tim said Genesee County has storage plans in place around the Bishop airport area.
- Jessica is conducting a weekly data survey collection with MEs on what storage capacity is needed.
- Jessica is also writing the Fatality Management Plan for TCF, which has one MERC trailer.
  - This is an alternate care site, within the TCF Center (formerly Cobo Hall).
  - The other MERC trailer was dispatched to Oakland County.
  - The MERC at TCF was deployed on Wednesday and the second MERC was deployed to Oakland was last week.
  - The MI-MORT team may be asked to support either one or both MERC trailers, but so far there have not been any requests.
- Jennifer Lixey Terrill updated that over two pages of resources were ordered through the State Emergency Operations Center (SEOC).

- Resources included 4,000 body bags, of which only 1,000 were received with 3,000 bags on back order.
  - Other supplies ordered included another MERC system that can handle 24 remains, which is on back order, with additional racks and trays designed for inside the refrigerated storage unit.
- A question on the thickness of the body bags was asked by Bob Gilbert, since the ones in the Push Packs are thicker than the ones used by hospitals.
  - This week Jessica had Jerry Ellsworth and Larry Zimmerman go through the MI-MORT trailers retrieving body bags, which are still in tubs and can be deployed as needed.
- Rick Drummer discussed Megamovers, which are normally used to evacuate patients from Nursing Homes and hospitals.
  - Rick said when using Megamovers, only one body bag is needed.
  - Rick Drummer, Region 2N, also has about 500 heavy duty bags.
- A discussion on disaster pouches and hospital body bags was held.
  - It would be helpful to move COVID-19 remains using a backboard or Megamover instead of a second body bag to reduce the strain on bags.
- Disinfection supplies are also needed to transfer remains, which is standard protocol.
  - Tim and Jessica are reviewing protocols to make sure the proper equipment is deployable.
- Tracee McIntosh reminded Jessica there are body bags and stretchers within the DART trailer if additional body bags are needed. Jessica thanked Tracee for reminding her.
- Jennifer Lixey Terrill said that Medical Surge triage equipment is also available.
  - Jessica said Alternate Care Sites (ACS) trailers do not have body bags.
  - Bob Gilbert said removal services may have their own supplies.
  - There will be four Michigan State Police staff members who may assist with security and remains removal.
- For transportation options will there be other volunteer staff available?
  - Can locals do on their own transports?
  - Can locals request MI-MORT?
  - Discussion continued on the various remains transport staff options.
- If using box trucks to transfer remains, how can we make the transport look as normal as possible to not draw attention?
  - Jessica asked for input.
  - Bob Gilbert said the area where the site in Livonia is located is a very high retail area so the most discrete transfer might be the best option.
  - Unmarked Dodge Caravans are used by some funeral homes.
  - Tim suggested using a Southern Michigan delivery services in SE Michigan, but most have costs associated with moves.
- A question on how many funeral directors would be available to volunteer services?
  - Tim said funeral homes are extremely stretched at this time.

- A suggestion was asked whether transfers from the hospital to the storage unit could be made through funeral homes.
- Bob Gilbert said some funeral homes transports are marked, which he does not recommend.
- Southern Michigan Service units can hold up to 6 bodies, which may decrease the surge.
- The remains could be picked up and placed in cold storage to assist with hospital surge and relieve the storage burden.
- Jessica updated another request, which is for MI-MORT to track remains in and remains out.
  - Roger Simpson asked who this team reports to r who is the overarching responsibility?
  - Jessica updated since the contract is with the State of Michigan, it would be the MSP Emergency Management.
  - Roger said Remains Management can handle the removal process, but he wanted to be sure everyone was on the same page.
  - Jessica said the state will assist and make it work through the Chain of Command.
- A question was asked if the funeral home takes a descendent, are the remains still transferred to the site and picked up by the funeral homes since hospitals do not have the capacity to store?
  - Jessica and Tim discussed storage scenarios yesterday.
  - The state will provide storage for funeral homes that are beyond their surge capacity.
  - Wayne County has a plan and 3 trucks on site with a fourth truck coming.
  - Oakland County has one MERC with other facilities that can provide surge capacity for hospitals and funeral homes.
- An operational plan was submitted to the state for a regional collection site using DPMU, the MERCs and MIC/VIC.
  - The regional collection sites will be used as needed throughout Wayne, Oakland, Macomb, and outside the City of Detroit.
  - The main storage site will be the first regional site, storing remains from hospitals with the DART team and Remains Management monitoring the transfers.
  - The MIC staff would set up the VIP for tracking remains with both digital and paper copies.
- Tim explained the everyday process for the TCF center, which may change based on the surge.
  - Jessica is creating documentation on what the state is asking the MI-MORT team to do.
  - Jessica suggested the team stay fluid and ready for any specific request being sent to MI-MORT volunteers on the pandemic through the MI Volunteer Registry (MVR).
  - Included in the request would be the number of days the volunteer is available to support storage.
  - Bob Gilbert said that if M-MORT is deployed, assistance from funeral personnel may be hard to get.
- A question was asked if a volunteer gets exposed to COVID-19 would there be a quarantine period recommended.
  - Questions should be directed to Dr. K and her staff for recommendations.

- EMS, doctors, and nurses are currently not being quarantined only if there are symptoms, so Tim's educated guess would be there would be no quarantine.
- Rick Drummer asked who will be physically moving the bodies?
  - Is MI-MORT just doing record keeping?
  - Tim and Jessica will find out the process when they visit the storage unit today, but Tim said the team should be prepared to do both.
- Roger Simpson questioned who is overseeing the body transfers?
  - Rick Drummer said that may depend on who owns the remains.
  - If the hospital is releasing or moving the remains to another site, it is still the hospital's responsibility to track?
  - Or is the responsibility of the storage unit to track?
  - Identification will be placed on the outside of the bag.
  - Tim suggested the best thing would be to have MI-MORT in charge, since they know the process of identifying through identification numbers. Tim feels the team will do the best job of getting the appropriate equipment deployed.
- Dr. Murphy is very impressed with the team and would be glad to assist.
  - Dentists may be needed to serve as trackers if they are provided with Just In Time training on the VIP system.
  - Maureen Schaefer, Hanna Friedlander and Ryan Wilkinson also offered to assist.
  - Remains Management just recently received volunteers, but many of them were funeral directors or MEs which may be unavailable at this time.
- Jennifer Lixey Terrill asked if she could share plans with local emergency managers since assistance will be needed from local Police Departments or local sheriff's offices in order to keep onlookers or television personnel away from the site.
  - Is security part of the package?
  - Only four staff members will be provided, but Jessica did not have full details yet.
  - Jessica said we should keep transfers as confidential as possible.
- A question was asked that following the site visit today, will there be a plan put together?
  - Yes, according to Tim, once he and Jessica visit the facility a plan will be developed. They need to see the storage unit needs, floor plan, and what supplies (such as printers, body bags, and trays) are needed.
- A question was asked whether State Workman's Compensation will be provided for staff in the event they become sick while deployed.
  - Tim updated that insurance will be provided but providing proof the illness came as a result of the deployment may be difficult since the insurance company may claim you became sick elsewhere.
- Jessica will keep in touch and update the team on details as soon as possible.
- Tim said to expect a short notice conference call with updates soon.