**MI-MORT Meeting Hot Wash Conference Call**

**July 23, 2020**

**10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.**

Attendance: Tori Arnold, Brook Babcock, Dr. Gary Berman, Kesha Dixon, Mike Dozeman, Dr. Todd Fenton, Dr. David Foran, Bill Funk, Cana Garrison, Jessica Gould, Dr. Patrick Houlihan, Mike Kolb, Patti Lyons, Jim Meyer, Dutch Nie, Maureen Schaffer, Tim Schramm, Roger Simpson, Jennifer Lixey Terrill, James Warunek, Ryan Wilkinson, Jessica Zarate

This is intended to be an open discussion, with a focus on learning from this deployment. Based on this discussion and other lessons learned an After-Action Report and Improvement Plan will be developed. Jessica Gould led the discussion:

1. **Planning/Legislation**
   1. Did you feel prepared for the deployment based on what you knew previously about MI-MORT?
   2. What would have made you feel more prepared?
      1. Gary Berman said from a preparedness standpoint staff were prepared, but there were issues with the request process for volunteers through the MI Volunteer Registry (MVR). The response process through the MVR was confusing, specifically on how to respond and how to indicate availability.
      2. Tim Schramm said he received a number of calls from team members about how to respond through the MVR since some team members did not receive the activation notice and there were a number of team members that didn’t update their profile, had different email addresses or were not getting information. Tim emailed some on how to reset passwords. He also recommends that volunteers update their profiles once or twice a year so that members are ready to respond to an activation and know how to use the MVR.
      3. Suggestion to send out an annual reminder to update profiles, email and phone number. Also suggested, was to complete a call down drill for MI-MORT staff two times per year.
      4. Brook Babcock said system training is important to keep the team updated on changes to the various systems. Since Brook works on three or four different systems, he said the best way to keep everyone updated is to have access materials available and said team members always contact the first person they can think of when they are having difficulties getting into systems.
2. **Coordination/Communication**
   1. Are there any partners that could have been notified faster, or were left out of communications?
   2. Did we communicate clearly the purpose of the remains management facility?
   3. Did we handle media inquiries appropriately, feel comfortable?
      1. Roger Simpson said the team was not kept updated on what was going on early or going on behind the scenes. The MI-MORT Command Staff should be kept up to date on the activation status since Tim Schramm and other team members were getting calls and were not informed on what message to relay, which was confusing. Having consistent up-to-date messaging would have been helpful.
      2. Brook Babcock suggested Tori Arnold develop procedural documents on accessing the MVR.
      3. Bill Funk said he was frustrated with the lack of communication; the MI-MORT team has been ready for 20 years for an activation. Bill thought the MI-MORT team should have been included with higher meetings at the State level as early as late March to discuss possible activation. They were needed but not activated until April 23, 2020. Having the Command Staff involved early on by attending meetings would have helped to get things moving faster and more efficiently.
      4. Maureen Schaeffer, referred back to what Gary Berman said earlier regarding the MVR activation, which would have worked better with more clarification as to how to complete the MVR availability check and having the schedule broken down day by day in the system.
      5. A social media policy needs to be developed earlier to be included with onboarding for the volunteers and added to the SOP.
      6. The State PIO, Bob Wheaton, was a tremendous partner and provided guidance before and during the activation. Tim Schramm said after the activation he provided updates on the MI-MORT team by conducting 13 interviews in one day.
      7. Bill Funk was surprised how well a secret the activation site was kept. He thought everyone did an awesome job. Hospitals and funeral homes also were respectful regarding not releasing the whereabouts of the location.
      8. Jim Meyer said a local newspaper asked him for an interview, but he declined and referred the interview to Bob Wheaton.
      9. Jennifer Lixey Terrill questioned how the Emergency Manager worked during the deployment.
         1. Gary Berman said this activation was an eye opener for state and county emergency management and the MI-MORT team will be recognized from now on.
         2. Tim Schramm said the Emergency Manager, Lt. Macqueen, was amazing in finding that deployment spot. The chosen central storage site was the spot the community needed.
            1. However, MI-MORT was deployed to a condemned building and there were safety concerns. The Fire Chief toured the facility and said fire suppression system might not work since the building was 72 years old.
            2. The hanger itself was perfect for what MI-MORT were trying to do, and created a great model for set up, but there were concerns with Tim and other team members since it was a condemned building. There were concerns regarding asbestos and contaminated water. The team was able to work around the issues, but safety concerns for the team might suggest a pre-visit to a site should be made before committing to using.
            3. It took the airport three days to provide access to a dumpster.
         3. A facility checklist should be developed and approved prior to agreeing to use a location or site.
      10. Cana asked if it could be possible for emergency management to pre-identify location sites. Jessica said this process has already been started throughout the state.
      11. Gary Berman suggested this process might be part of the MEs Mass Fatality Plans and may have already been completed.
3. **Notification/Activation**
   1. Did you feel clearly communicated with regarding pre-activation notification?
   2. Did you feel clearly communicated with regarding activation?
   3. Other issues not previously discussed?
      1. Tim used the only location address submitted to him from emergency management, which made it difficult to find the location, parking lot, and other information. Rick Drummer, Region 2N, was bringing supplies and had difficulty finding the location. Mi-MORT found ways to work around it, but the morning of deployment the site location was difficult to find.
      2. Mike Dozeman said for the next deployment it might be helpful for participants to be made aware of what type of environment to expect, so they know what type of clothing to pack.
      3. Brook said there is a facility checklist that may need to be reviewed prior to deployment. For instance, there was no power for the MERC cooling system which would have been good to have.
      4. Within the SNS site instructions there are driving kits which makes it easier to locate facilities. Brook suggested checking with the SNS team on their instructions.
      5. Roger Simpson suggested adding the Command Staff to site inspections, since there was no electrical hookup at the site in the spot set up for the MERC, which added an extra expense.
      6. Bill Funk said not every building will be perfect, but the team was lucky to find an electrician from a local funeral home to install electricity. The team was ready within 24 hours. Bill acknowledged a quick repack but stated that was because not all the equipment was used, and the equipment used was decontaminated as deployment went along. Under different circumstances the repack could take 2-3 days. Using limited supplies made it quicker to pack than in the past and everyone worked well together. Bill enjoyed working with everyone and said everyone worked hard.
      7. Tim said one of the things the Remains Management team members did ahead of time was that following the final releases, the MERC rack was removed from the system, decontaminated and washed with bleach, so realistically the demobilization began early. This made the final packing of equipment easier.
4. **Facility/Site Setup**
   1. How do you feel facility set up went?
   2. What strengths or weaknesses did you see during the setup?
   3. Strengths and weakness and where to make improvements.
      1. Brook said the facility was very dirty when they arrived. The front rooms had to be cleaned first so Brook could set up computer equipment. Brook suggested a state agency, such as DTMB, be hired to clean the facilities prior to deployment.
      2. Brook asked if room purifiers should be ordered or what other Just-in-Time supplies were needed?
      3. Gary Berman said he is not a big fan of Just-in-Time supply ordering, especially during a pandemic. His dental profession is still waiting for supplies, such as PPE and masks, that were requested in April.
      4. Brook suggested, decreasing the Just-in-Time items to order and instead packing all necessary supplies within the trailers sky high to get everything in. Necessary items such as vacuums, toilet paper, bleach, napkins, all other supplies should be ordered now.
      5. Just-in-Time meals are hard to find within one day. Tim Schramm made a trip to Home Depot, which was a 10-minute trip, that took three hours due to lines, and limited people allowed in stores. This was a big learning experience.
      6. Supply purchasing was made very difficult because of pandemic. What more can be stored in caches? What items should be ready in advance after arriving at location site?
      7. Purchases had to be made on personal credit cards, which is not a good practice. If there is a government issued cards at the time of deployment, they should be available. Worked through necessary purchases, using the MFDA credit card and personal credit cards, but this was an imperfect process.
      8. Roger Simpson said during his recent DMORT deployment, credit cards were provided to staff from the feds.
      9. SNS has a credit card along with a state finance person, and lots of purchases can be made through the CHECC or SEOC. Jennifer Lixey Terrill said there are SEOC cards and every state agency has a card. The credit cards from DTMB can go up to $500,000. Requests can also be made through FEMA. Jessica Gould said a state credit cards requires a state finance person be deployed since there are rules regarding who can use a state card.
      10. Brook discussed the security system. He brought a camera system, which he set up, but suggested MI-MORT purchase a security system. Several staff brought in their own power tools. Does MI-MORT need additional set up tools? As the week went along, changes were made as needed. A comment was made this was necessary or would have been two steps behind.
      11. Tim Schramm said from a Command staff perspective if the team were not running a 24/7 operation, security cameras would be helpful and would help identify if something happened and provide a video record if someone was entering the space without authorization. It would be good to have computer monitors in command post for monitoring the cameras.
      12. The administrative piece was missing upon arrival, and there was no sign in and sign out process for badging. Jessica Gould stated she was aware within hours of the deployment that more program staff need to deploy initially in future. Jessica and Tori Arnold plan to deploy during the first couple of days next time.
      13. Need a printed DPMU inventory to get started, on the back of each trailer. Also needed is a system to track inventory as it is removed. If a ream of paper is removed out of box “43”, identify it as removed and where it was used.
      14. Brook said it takes time to set up the equipment and get the DPMU inventory on-site. There needs to be a printed copy of supplies upon arrival or in the back of each trailer in order to provide a better job of tracking supplies, on what was used and the location of used supplies, such as box 43 in trailer 3.
      15. Jim Meyer brought his own laptop and used for internet access regularly (MI-MORT computer did not connect to internet). Discussion regarding IT setup followed. The system is designed so that there will be internet on only a few computers. For instance, only one Remains Management computers will have internet access for security reasons. Brook suggested labeling locations for internet services.
      16. Cana questioned whether the DPMU kicker boxes had inventory lists.
      17. A suggestion was made to develop a security system procedure in the event there are no cameras available. Having a security person on staff 24/7 was another suggestion. Jessica updated there was security available 7 days for a week, but not for 24 hours/day. In the event of an emergency, Jennifer Lixey Terrill suggested calling 9-1-1 immediately. Tim said the team did coordinate security with the airport dispatch police and fire department made signs that in case of an emergency to call 9-1-1 or contact airport security. Both the airport and fire chiefs both came down to inspect and tour the facility. Initially, there were issues with airport personnel in active hangers, peaking in the windows. The MI-MORT staff placed tarps over the windows. Jennifer said the Emergency Manager is also there to assist if asked.
      18. Jerry Ellsworth did a fantastic job setting up the radio channels, which was very helpful. However, having this ready to go on deployment or as close too would be better for next time.
5. **Staffing** 
   1. Was there sufficient staff? Too much staff?
   2. Were staff used appropriately?
   3. How was it working with EMS?
   4. Enough staff?
      1. Data entry staff needed two people knowing how to enter data.
      2. IT support was almost non-existent.
      3. Remains Management had enough people per Roger Simpson since several people volunteered from other disciplines. There is a lot to consider when activated, and those closest to the Southeast Michigan area vs. those further away were considered.
      4. Brian Murphy said staff really had everything they needed and there was plenty to do.
      5. Pat Houlihan said it was perfect working with EMS as they did what they were asked to do, and everything went well. The MI-MORT team updated EMS on the process, but it might have been helpful to have a checklist. Jim Meyer stated there were three people, a note taker and two team members handling remains which went well.
      6. Jim Meyer mentioned that data entry was handled most days with just one person, but it was always nice to have two people on staff.
      7. Tim Schramm said from a Command Staff standpoint coordinating transportation with EMS was fantastic. The transfer requests were provided at 4:00 p.m. to the team, but Tim was able to contact them up to 6:00 p.m. and still get transports. Most EMS personnel were the same and knew the location and what was expected. Tremendous partner.
      8. Tim updated that during the 28-day activation, the staff was awesome and gave up their time and some weekends, which was tremendously helpful. Some worked a straight 5 – 7 days and certainly should be acknowledged. Tim said from a Command Staff perspective, MI-MORT should not expect a staff of 12-15 to cover a 28-day deployment, but it was difficult to find additional volunteers. Tim had several MI-MORT team members tell him that if they were working with COVID-19 descendent they did not want to volunteer.
      9. Maureen Schaefer said she felt safe wearing the Tyvek suit and face masks.
      10. Brian Murphy thanked Tim for all his leadership. Tim worked during all the deployment. Kudos to Tim!
      11. Jennifer Lixey Terrill said the Incident Management Team (IMT) could have provided support for all types of services if asked. She suggested augmenting staffing needs through the SEOC for about 5 or 6 staff members. Ryan Wilkinson said this is a capability that should be more available in the next couple of years, having attended a recent IMT meeting. Jessica asked Ryan if the activation was lacking to which he responded, yes, from a documentation standpoint. Ryan said they made it work, but he just wanted the option.
      12. Roger Simpson said that having a logistics person on-site would have been helpful. Every DMORT team has a logistics person who runs to gets supplies and does other tasks, and this person should always be on-site.
      13. It was suggested that an admin/finance person would have necessary, both from a logistics (food) role as well as completing forms (reimbursement forms, sign in/sign out, etc.)
      14. Brook stated that if MI-MORT needs to downsize, need to reconsider what is needed.
      15. Tim, Brian Murphy and others said that if there are people on the MI-MORT team that did not want to respond because of COVID-19, there might have been other jobs if they were needed elsewhere or they might need to transfer or get reassigned to another section. Cross training is very important.
      16. When called for assistance during a disaster, you go.
6. **Deployment**
   1. Do you feel we protected the safety of MI-MORT staff?
   2. How were the accommodations?
   3. How was the food?
   4. In what ways should this deployment alter the way we plan for MI-MORT?
   5. What parts of our planning need revision from our experience?
      1. Roger Simpson said he only stayed one night at the hotel, but it was very clean, and food for breakfast was provided in a Go Bag because of COVID-19. The staff found restaurants who provided take out and lunch orders were placed at 9:30 for noon lunches.
      2. Brook suggested since it may be hard to get food during a pandemic, you might want to stock food or find another solution. Roger said when he was deployed in Haiti, they used MREs that could last up to 10 years.
      3. Cana said MREs are good for about 5 years in 75o temperatures.
      4. Roger said the hotel location was great, only 10 minutes away. When he was deployed to California during COVID-19 the hotel was 45 miles away.
      5. Jim Meyer said the hotel was good, close, and had a laundry facility, which was very convenient. The staff were great, but the breakfast was not.
      6. Jennifer said if a hotel location with laundry was a good solution to be sure to add it to the checklist.
      7. Roger said the local laundromat was only 1/10 mile away from the hotel, which was also convenient.
      8. The first week of operations there were issues with hotel charges, so state staff called the hotel to correct. The hotel was great and safe for the MI-MORT staff.
      9. Cana Garrison said during her first night at the hotel, she was not on the roster, but the hotel accommodated her. She, as a non-medical person, felt very safe at the activation site wearing PPE.
      10. Jim Meyer learned a lot of safety tips which he will take back to his own funeral home.
      11. Gary Berman said the safety aspect of the activation was critical, and there were PPE and cleaning supplies available. The staff felt safe, had supplies, but staff needs to restock supplies, especially N-95 masks. Tim’s Safety Points had the staff assigned to disinfecting every day and cleaning up after themselves. Staff was assigned daily disinfecting processes.
      12. Jennifer Lixey Terrill questioned the staff’s mental health concerns and asked how SEOC can help. Jessica updated that there were Post Activation packets sent to the team which followed along those lines. If any team has any other concerns, please let either Jessica or Tim know, and they will make sure to discuss privately.
      13. Tim would encourage everyone who participated to get an antibody test through their personal physician. It is a quick blood draw with results in less than 24 hours.
7. **Remains Management**
   1. Did the process of remains management go smoothly (handling, sorting, final disposition)?
   2. Was there any policy/laws/planning, that hampered the process?
      1. The remains management process was previous discussed, but from Roger’s perspective there were issues with equipment. They started salvaging rails and the backboards don’t work until the new rails are added. They need the trays designed for the system. MERC blankets were an issue as they kept falling off the body bags. When the system started losing fluids for a while, the team had to obtain fluids to keep it running. Bill Funk had to modify the storage system inside the 53’ trucks. Bill Funk asked is MI-MORT was going to keep the trailers? The MERC system, after using for a month, was great and worked well using the forklift. Bill created a platform to move bodies without hurting staff backs. The 53’ trailers would be great for keeping and transporting supplies for deployment. Extra trailers would be a huge benefit for moving and redoing the entire operations. Currently there are three MERCs and six new trailers.
      2. Roger really likes the MERC after using it for 1 month, as long as MI-MORT has a forklift for moving the remains.
      3. Megamovers would be helpful, which cost about $20/piece. Email Jessica or Tim the price list for the Meagmovers.
      4. Dutch Nie said they used four or five bags per remains and some were leaking. He recommended using the BioSeal product, which has no leaks and would replace 3 or 4 bags with no issues.
8. **Demobilization**
   1. How did demobilization go?
   2. Did you feel safety measures were in place?
   3. How do we effectively setup in an alternate location if another part of the state is highly impacted?
   4. What if a secondary incident occurs (plane crash) requiring MI-MORT activation, will we be prepared?
      1. Any thoughts send to Jessica.

**Open Discussion**

* Tim feels MI-MORT is better prepared today for deployment or operations than it was on April 24, 2002. Experience goes well beyond exercises and training.
* Tim had a conversation with Bill Funk, Roger Simpson, Gary Berman, Brian Murphy and Patrick Houlihan and felt with the staff that was deployed could tackle anything that would be necessary for MI-MORT. Everyone there had a single cause and a single goal, but there is always room for improvement. Everyone walked away with an increased confidence level.
* Dutch Nie updated that in 2017 the Michigan National Mass Fatality plan created by MFDA, was recognized and Dutch said hats off to the Morgue Team for their assistance in developing. There is considerable interested in seeing the Michigan Plan activation and how it was deployed. Dutch wanted to give a Big Thank You to Commander Schramm for all his excellent leadership during the years and especially during the activation!
* During the National Funeral Directors Association (NFDA) conference in August, Dutch and Tim will take part in the panel discussion to answer and share lessons learned during the Michigan COVID-19 Response.
* Jessica thanked everyone that deployed and for participating and sharing their thoughts during this call.