

# FAMILY ASSISTANCE CENTER

THE ROLE OF DMORT TEAMS IN  
THE FAMILY ASSISTANCE  
CENTER

## Family Assistance Center



- Families *perception* of the Family Assistance Center becomes the

**REALITY**

of the incident when presented to the mass media.

# Family Assistance Centers Should Provide

Organization

Professionalism

Concern

Care

Calmness

Counseling





## Family Assistance Center

- Provide comfortable place for families to gather
- Away from disaster site
- Easily Accessible
- Easy to find
- Provide creature comforts to family
- No media in closed areas



## Considerations for the FAC

- Personnel
  - Behavioral Health Personnel
  - Clergy
  - Logistical Support
  - Security Personnel
  - Medical Personnel



## Considerations for the FAC

- Equipment
  - Office Supplies
  - Fax
  - Copy Machines
  - Two Way Communications with Morgue site
  - ID Making Equipment
  - Television or Radio for News



## Considerations for the FAC



### ■ Other Needs

- Private rooms for counseling and information interviews
- Lounge area with television or radio for news
- Restrooms
- Food and Beverages
- Space for all agencies



## Agencies at the FAC

- NTSB
- FBI
- SEMA
- FEMA
- DMORT
- Insurance Carrier Representatives
- Police Agencies
- Red Cross
- Salvation Army
- Clergy Organizations
- Counseling Organizations
- Political Representatives
- Airline Representatives

## Who Is Responsible For Setting Up The FAC

**Medical Examiner  
Coroner  
Airlines/NTSB  
State/Local Officials**

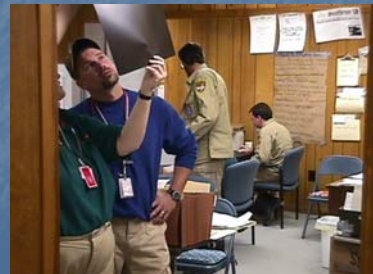
## Where Should The FAC Be Set Up?

- Hotel w/meeting rooms
- Convention Center (Local Incident)
- Any building large enough to accommodate approximately 6-8 family members per victim

# What Locations Should Be Avoided?

- Schools
- Churches
- Buildings near the morgue site
- Any location that could have a negative long-term emotional impact

Our Job Is To Assist With  
Identification, Notification  
And Ultimately The Release  
Of The Remains



## Disaster Mortuary Team Functions at the Family Assistance Center

- Conduct Interviews for **Ante-Mortem** Data Collection with victims N.O.K.
  - private area
  - quiet
  - consistency in recording responses
  - emotionally difficult
- Receive and forward dental, fingerprint, radiographic and other information to Morgue

## DMORT Functions at the Family Assistance Center cont.

- **Conduct follow up interviews to obtain and forward additional information requested by Morgue Personnel to assist in Identification - it may take more than one interview.**
- Notification of Positive Identification to Survivors
- Coordinate release of remains to next of kin according to their wishes
  - **NOK not always a spouse or parent**

# V.I.P.

The Victim Identification Program

Using Science and Technology  
to Manage

**Mass Fatality Incidents**

## V.I.P. Program

- Challenges in development
  - Satisfying everyone's needs
  - Format of Program
  - Compatibility with other products
  - User friendliness

# V.I.P. Program

What it is.....

What it is not...

# V.I.P. Program

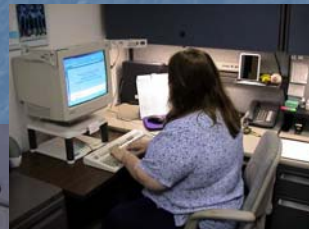
- Ante-mortem section
- Post-mortem section
- Dental section - WinID
- Uses Ante & Post Mortem Info. To Assist in I.D.

## V.I.P. Program

- Interview form
  - Complete
  - Standardized answers
  - database friendly

## Ante-Mortem VIP Information Collected By:

- Person to Person Interviews
- Phone Interviews
- Internet



# FAC Operations

- Family Assistance Center
  - Interviews Families
  - Updates/Verification of data
  - Reconcile the Manifest
  - Responsible for incoming data
    - Medical Records
    - Radiograph Records
    - Update information

## Post-Mortem VIP Information Collected By:

- Post-mortem Exam In Morgue
- Full Body/Dental X-rays
- DNA Testing
- Examination and Documentation of Personal Effects
  - **Only effects found ON the body**



# V.I.P. Program

- IR Operational Issues
  - Data Entry
  - Reports generated
  - Dispersion of Reports
    - Who gets what?
    - Control/Security Issues
    - Authorized Personnel Only

*LET'S TAKE A BREAK  
THEN  
LOOK AT ANTE-MORTEM  
VIP*



# *INFORMATION RESOURCES (IR)*

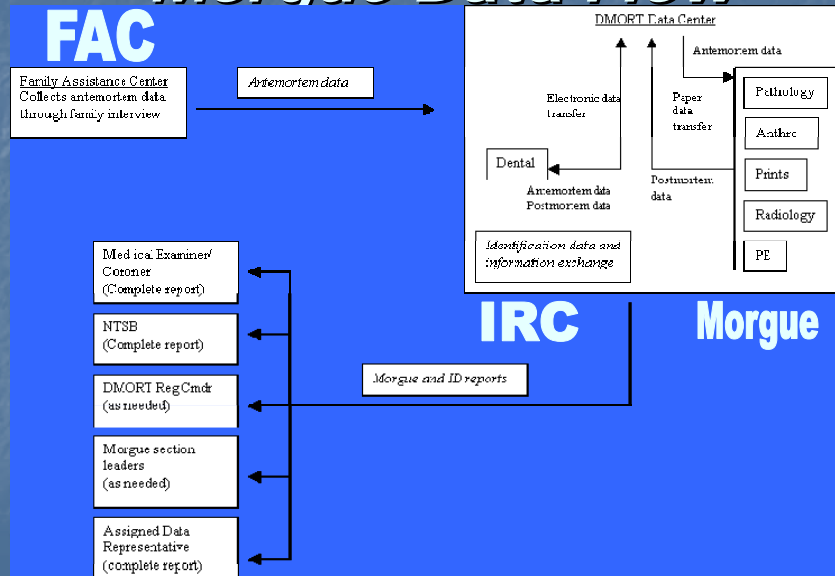
**The I.R. Section is:  
THE VICTIM  
INFORMATION  
CENTER DURING  
AN MFI**

# WHAT IS IR?

- An information clearinghouse
- Primary purpose always the same
  - Gather and organize information
- Functions may differ from one deployment to another
- **Supports FAC, Morgue and MST**



## Morgue Data Flow



## *Objectives of the IR section...*

- **Receive information**
- **Data entry**
- **Audit all entered information**



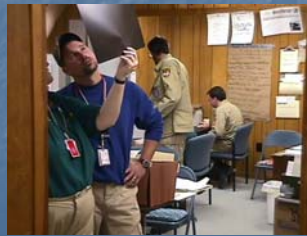
## *Objectives of the IR section... (con't)*

- **Catalogue medical/dental records, x-rays, etc.**
- **Create forms, lists and reports**



## *Objectives of the IR section...(con't)*

- Provide information to the appropriate individuals or agencies
- Produce Individual Victim Reports
- Sometimes assist with the ID process



## *Objectives of the IR section...(con't)*

- Prepare information to be turned over to the agent in charge of the incident
- NEVER make assumptions
- TRY to maintain your sanity

## IR Equipment

- Set up by DPMU team
  - Maintained by IR section leader and DPMU tech
  - Includes:
    - Copier
    - Phones
    - FAX machine
    - Shredders
    - Scanner
    - Wireless equipment
    - Printers
    - Office supplies
- AND OF COURSE....COMPUTERS

## IR Section



# IR and Data Entry Area

- **Set up in a wide range of places, dependant upon incident...**
  - At the morgue site
    - (Tarboro, N.C.)
  - At the morgue site and EOC
    - (WTC)
  - In a trailer at morgue site
    - (Walker Co., GA)
  - Near the FAC
    - (Flights 587, NY and 5481 Charlotte)
  - **IN** the M.E.'s office
    - (Warwick Club Fire, Rhode Island)

...And a variety of sizes





## *Who provides information to the IR?*

- Primary sources – **FAC and Morgue (VIP)**
  - Sometimes both, sometimes only one
- **But also...**
  - WTC – **Police, Red Cross, Salvation Army, hospitals, hotlines, etc.**
  - Walker Co., GA. – Local family interview forms
  - Tarboro, N.C. – Funeral records, cemetery info

## VIP Information

- Antemortem Information
  - Obtained through family interviews
- Postmortem Information
  - Obtained from morgue operations
    - Pathology    Anthropology    X-ray
    - Dental        Fingerprint        DNA
    - Photography    Personal Effects

## Matchmaking (so to speak)

- Involves doing extensive searches
- Make a list of matching characteristics
  - With emphasis on scientific data
  - WINID2 plays a major role if antemortem dental records are available
- Matches, when done by DMORT team members, must be approved by the DMORT incident commander and/or coroner/M.E.

## Forms, Forms, Forms

- All deployments use many forms
  - Old and new
  - For FAC, MST, Morgue area and others
- Typically produced by the IR section leader or person assigned by IR section leader
- Information goes only to the person intended to receive it
- All old forms are shredded

# Lists and Reports

- Based on field specific searches
  - SS#, completed interviews, positive ID, released remains, name of cemetery, etc.
  - Tarboro, N.C. – Lists produced each A.M. and P.M. for team in Cemetery
  - All lists shredded after use

## Hurricane Floyd Cemetery Lists



## Information Wrap-up

- VIP information is turned to CD
- **All information, records and personal property are turned over to Coroner/M.E. or agent in charge of incident**
- Local authorities are tutored on VIP prior to DMORT leaving
- All information is deleted from computers
- No Information is retained by DMORT

## Why do IR and the FAC make a good pair?

- They didn't always
  - At times they didn't even see eye to eye
    - IR always wants more information
    - FAC needs a place on the form to put different info
    - IR has info on interview form, but no place to enter it
    - FAC is hand writing 8 pages of info, many times a day
    - IR can't read the handwriting
- Not exactly a perfect relationship

## A little understanding goes a long way!

- Neither group understood, nor had **experienced**, the other's job
  - Experiencing both jobs not always possible
  - Cross-training for both can help
- JUST REMEMBER, there is typically a reason why something was done the way it was

## Working Together

- Flight 587
  - FAC and IR in Jacob Javitts Center
    - All VIP forms reviewed immediately after interview
    - Additional information, if needed, requested before the family left
    - Data entry completed immediately
    - Especially helpful when multiple interviews done for one person.
    - Aided in communication when FAC group went to D.R.

## Working Together (con't)

- Flight 5481
  - Small operation
  - FAC and IR in same room
  - Opportunity for both teams to see the other in action
  - IR for technical support, data entry and FAC support
  - Able to communicate and produce information rapidly

So you think you  
might want to work  
in the IR section?

## Keep a few things in mind...

- It is anything but exciting work
- Repetitious, boring and at times seems unending
- And just when you think you are just about done, IT'S AUDIT TIME.
- However, it still has its personal moments

## It's all about TEAMWORK!

