

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
Public Health Emergency

For more information: <http://www.phe.gov/preparedness/responders/ndms/teams/pages/dmort.aspx>

Disaster Mortuary Operational Response Teams (DMORTs)

What Is A Disaster Mortuary Operational Response Team (DMORT)?

The National Response Framework (NRF) utilizes the National Disaster Medical System (NDMS), as part of the Department of Health & Human Services, Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response (ASPR), Office of Preparedness and Operations (OPEO), under Emergency Support Function #8 (ESF #8), Health and Medical Care, to provide victim identification and mortuary services. These responsibilities include:

- temporary morgue facilities
- victim identification
- forensic dental pathology
- forensic anthropology methods
- processing
- preparation
- disposition of remains

In order to accomplish this mission, Disaster Mortuary Operational Response Teams (DMORTs) were developed. DMORTs are composed of private citizens, each with a particular field of expertise, who are activated in the event of a disaster. NDMS/DMORT personnel are required to maintain appropriate certifications and licensure within their discipline. When personnel are activated, licensure and certification is recognized by all States, and the personnel are compensated for their duty time by the Federal government as a intermittent Federal employee. During an emergency response, DMORTs work under the guidance of local authorities by providing technical assistance and personnel to identify and process deceased victims.

The DMORTs are directed by ASPR/OPEO/NDMS. Teams are composed of funeral directors, medical examiners, coroners, pathologists, forensic anthropologists, medical records technicians and transcribers, finger print specialists, forensic odontologists, dental assistants, x-ray technicians, mental health specialists, computer professionals, administrative support staff, and security and investigative personnel.

The Department of Health & Human Services, Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response, in support of the NDMS DMORT program, maintains three (3) Disaster Portable Morgue Units (DPMUs). These DPMUs are staged at locations on the East and West coast for immediate deployment in support of DMORT operations. The DPMU is a depository of equipment and supplies for deployment to a disaster site. It contains a complete morgue with designated workstations for each processing element and prepackaged equipment and supplies.