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LESSON LEARNED

Mass Casualty Incidents: Post-Incident Review Conducted by the Chief Medical Examiner

SUMMARY

Following a mass casualty incident, the chief medical examiner should convene a meeting of all medical examiner personnel to discuss lessons learned and identify improvements to response practices.

DESCRIPTION

The fire that destroyed the Station Club in Warwick, Rhode Island on February 20, 2003, resulted in the death of 96 individuals. The office of the medical examiner (OME) was responsible for locating, photographing, and documenting the deceased. OME personnel worked throughout the night to complete the on-scene investigation. The bodies and commingled remains were then transported to the Rhode Island State Morgue. OME personnel, volunteer dentists, and personnel from the Rhode Island Funeral Director's Association (RIFDA) worked around the clock in order to document and identify the decedents. The victim identification process was completed by February 25, 2003. The use of dental records and fingerprinting for victim identification precluded the need for DNA testing, speeding up the process and reducing its associated costs.

Following the completion of the victim identification process, the chief medical examiner immediately dismissed all OME personnel, volunteer dentists and RIFDA personnel. According to the *Rhode Island Station Club Fire After-Action Report*, the chief medical examiner should have conducted a post-incident review, given the large number of victims processed by the OME and the extensive volunteer efforts involved in the victim identification process.

The *After-Action Report* recommends that following a mass casualty incident, the chief medical examiner should convene a meeting of all medical examiner personnel to discuss lessons learned and identify improvements to response practices. Lessons learned from post-incident follow-up should be shared with all OME personnel.

CITATION

Titan Systems Corporation. *Rhode Island: The Station Club Fire After-Action Report: State, Local, and Federal Government and the Private Sector*. 13 Jul 2004.
https://www.llis.dhs.gov/member/secure/detail.cfm?content_id=10806

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