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LESSON LEARNED

Air Medical Disaster Response: Developing a Database of Regional Coordination Capabilities

SUMMARY

Regional emergency managers and emergency medical authorities should consider developing a regional database of all dispatch centers and associated capabilities to assist in coordinating air medical assets during large-scale disasters.

DESCRIPTION

On June 28, 2010, the Tampa Metropolitan Medical Response System and the Florida AeroMedical Association co-sponsored the Air Medical Disaster Response Tabletop Exercise (TTX). The purpose of the TTX was to evaluate response concepts, plans, and capabilities associated with an air medical response to a category 5 hurricane making landfall in the Tampa, Florida, region. The TTX scenario projected that the hurricane caused more than 2,000 fatalities and left more than 10,000 injured. In addition, more than 1 million people were left without electricity, and thousands had to be rescued by air or boat. TTX objectives focused on air medical command and control, communications, crew resource management, and air asset technology, among others. Forty-six participants from 31 state, regional, local, and private sector organizations participated in the TTX.

During the TTX, participants observed that there is a lack of regional dispatch coordination for air medical assets during a large-scale disaster, particularly for transfers between affected hospitals. The participants did not know which entity had the equipment capability and resources to coordinate all air medical assets operating within the region during response operations. They commented that during Hurricane Katrina operations, the U.S. Coast Guard established air traffic control and coordinated more than 300 air assets of different types and capabilities.

TTX participants recommended that a local dispatch center should be designated to coordinate all hospital transfers within the region during a large-scale disaster. To achieve this, the Tampa region should develop a database of all regional dispatch centers and their capabilities for inclusion within air medical response plans. TTX participants noted that coordination centers outside the region will need to be addressed as they will need to maintain coordination of their licensed air medical assets.

Regional emergency managers and emergency medical authorities should consider developing a regional database of all dispatch centers and associated capabilities to assist in coordinating air medical assets during large-scale disasters.

CITATION

Tampa Metropolitan Medical Response System and Florida AeroMedical Association. *Tampa MMRS/FAMA Air Medical Disaster Response Tabletop Exercise Final After Action Report/Improvement Plan*. 25 Aug 2010.

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