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#### PRIMARY DISCIPLINES

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## LESSON LEARNED

### Mortuary Services: Deployment of Medical Examiner Personnel to a Mass Casualty Incident

#### SUMMARY

The chief medical examiner should develop a staffing plan that maximizes efficiency and ensures the ability to place expanded staff and resources on-scene during a mass casualty incident.

#### DESCRIPTION

The fire that destroyed the Station Club in Warwick, Rhode Island on February 20, 2003, resulted in the death of 100 individuals. The chief medical examiner, although notified of the situation, chose not to deploy to the scene. This left one investigator from the office of the medical examiner on-scene who was responsible for locating, photographing, and documenting the deceased. Although the on-scene investigator continually relayed incident information to the chief medical examiner, the chief opted not to direct additional medical examiner personnel to the scene. This forced the on-scene investigator to remain without relief until the investigation was completed, more than seventeen hours after the fire had been extinguished.

The scope and complexity of a mass casualty incident requires that multiple investigators be notified and ordered to report to the scene. The chief medical examiner should develop a staffing plan that maximizes on-scene efficiency and ensures the ability to place expanded staff and resources on-scene during a mass casualty incident. The chief medical examiner should also be required to deploy to the scene during a mass casualty incident in order to lend added investigative expertise.

#### 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.

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