

MASS FATALITY OPERATIONAL RESPONSE PLAN

Section 2: Recovery Operations

2021



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2 Recovery Operations

Recovery of the deceased is the first stage in the *Identification Process*. There will be tremendous pressure from surviving family members, public officials, the media and others to rapidly recover and identify the deceased following a mass fatality event. Although the public will expect the process to begin immediately following a disaster, recovery operations shall not begin until the disaster site has been assessed and declared safe and the recovery teams assembled and briefed/trained on the proper recovery procedures. The recovery team shall then be adequately outfitted and trained in the proper use of required personal protection equipment (PPE). Strict adherence to recovery procedures involves the systematic documentation of all remains, personal effects, and other evidence. Despite pressure from the public, adherence to procedure helps to ensure the safety of the recovery team members and the secure and respectful recovery of the deceased. All individuals associated with the recovery efforts shall follow all applicable Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) regulations.

For the majority of commercial transportation-related mass fatalities, the FBI Evidence Response Teams (ERTs), working together with the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB), will provide support personnel for the search and recovery of human remains, personal effects, and accident-related wreckage. In these events, the State of Louisiana ESF 8 DHH will remain in charge of the recovery but will have the support of the FBI response teams and the NTSB.

2.1 Site Evaluation

The State of Louisiana ESF 8 LDH shall work with first responders at the incident site (e.g. Fire Department, Hazmat teams) to evaluate the scene and ensure the site is safe for recovery operations. If a potential hazard is suspected at any point during the recovery efforts, the recovery effort shall be halted until the appropriately trained individuals deem the scene safe. In addition to an initial scene evaluation ensuring safety, the scene must be secured for the protection of the site and the responders. Securing the scene will preserve the site and promote

the integrity of all mass fatality evidence, including human remains, personal effects, and any other items that may assist in identifying the deceased.

Once the State of Louisiana ESF 8 LDH deems the site safe to enter, a scene evaluation team shall assess the disaster site, establish communication with the onsite commander, evaluate the scene to determine the size and complexity of body recovery operations, and develop a field action plan. The scene evaluation team should:

- Document date, time, and location of incident;
- Determine size and scope of scene;
- Obtain photo and/or video documentation (video documentation shall be made without sound);
- Determine number of known fatalities;
- Estimate number of potential fatalities;
- Estimate number of remains for autopsy;
- Determine the condition of the bodies;
- Appraise accessibility of the incident scene and determine level of difficulty for body recovery;
- Identify possible biological, chemical, physical or radiological hazards; and
- Determine types and numbers of personnel and equipment needed for body recovery.

Information obtained from the site evaluation will assist in developing and establishing not only the Recovery Operations, but also the Morgue and Family Assistance Center operations. This information will be used to develop appropriate incident specific recovery policies, procedures, and forms and will help determine the resources—equipment, supplies, and personnel—required to properly recover the human remains. It is important that standard procedures and nomenclature be used across the entire scene. If various recovery teams use different nomenclature to document the search for bodies it will be difficult, if not impossible, to have a good understanding of the bodies that have or have not been found. The use of different symbols in documenting the presence or absence of bodies located in buildings during the recovery efforts after Hurricane Katrina is an excellent example of how detrimental varied nomenclature can be. Following the initial recovery effort, it was not clear which symbols were used to indicate the result of the search therefore subsequent body recoveries had to be performed several times.

Recovery teams shall only utilize terminology and forms approved by the State of Louisiana ESF 8 LDH.

2.1.1 Grid/Sector Determination

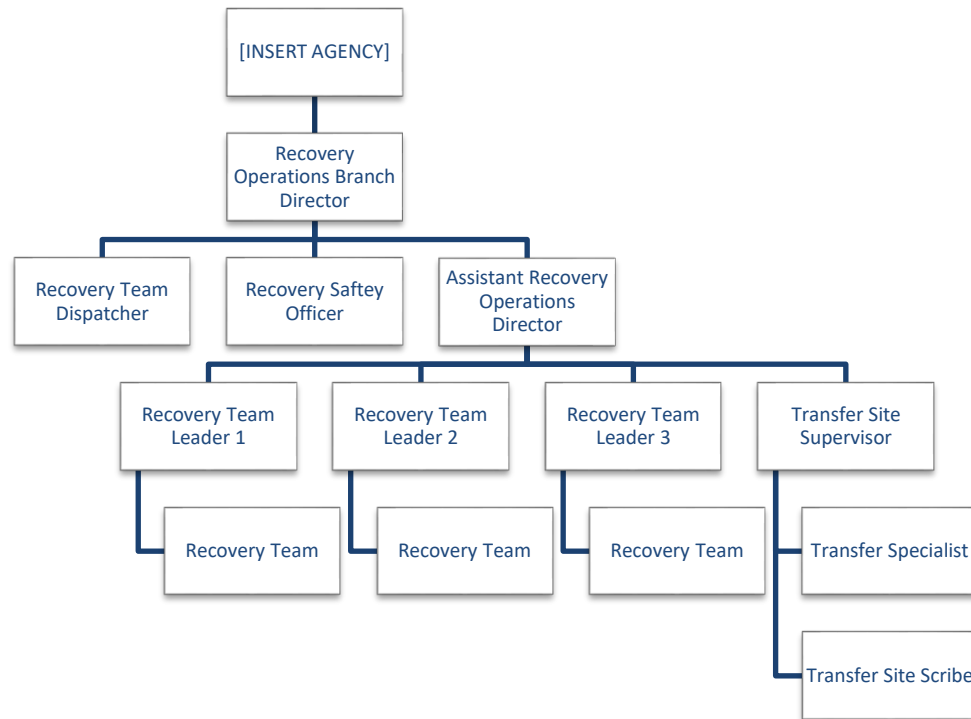
The incident scene shall be divided (based on size) into grids and/or sectors. These grids and/or sectors will be used for dispatching recovery teams and to identify specific locations of recoveries on recovery documentation. The grids and/or sectors shall also be used when performing searches. Using grids and/or sectors to mark the scene will reduce the possibility of repeating searches in the same area and provide recovery teams with precise locations of reported human remains.

2.1.2 Contaminated Incident Sites

The State of Louisiana ESF 8 DHH shall request the assistance of decontamination teams if there is any indication that the incident site may be contaminated with hazardous material. In the event that the incident site is contaminated, appropriate decontamination measures shall be performed before human remains are taken to the morgue. For example, if the State of Louisiana ESF 8 LDH determines that outside resources are needed to support decontamination, a request may be made to the Federal Government for assistance from NDMS/DMORT Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) teams. If available, the DMORT WMD team may be deployed to decontaminate the remains. The DMORT WMD team will set up a series of decontamination zones where the contaminated remains can be brought to and decontaminated. Only when remains have moved through the decontamination process shall the remains be considered safe to process through the morgue.

2.2 Incident Command Structure

An organizational chart for recovery operations is outlined below and shall be modified to meet incident-specific needs:



The State of Louisiana ESF 8 LDH shall maintain a NIMS compliant organizational structure at all times.

2.2.1 *Recovery Operations Director*

The State of Louisiana ESF 8 LDH will appoint a Recovery Operations Director to oversee all recovery operations and to serve as a liaison between Recovery and Morgue Operations. The Recovery Operations Director will report directly to the Operations Section Chief or the State of Louisiana ESF 8 LDH depending on the established Incident Command Structure (ICS). In addition, the Recovery Operations Director will work with the State of Louisiana ESF 8 DHH, as well as local, state, and federal resources, to establish an organized command and control structure for recovery operations and to develop an integrated ICS.

The Recovery Operations Director will appoint Team Leaders and ensure that recovery teams are properly staffed. The Director will maintain a Daily Recovery Teams Roster (see [Recovery: Attachment A](#)) with names of individuals and their team position.

The Recovery Operations Director shall coordinate with law enforcement, the State of Louisiana ESF 8 LDH's office and other agencies that will receive reported missing person's cases or reports of specific locations where human remains have been seen or presumed to be. When appropriate, the Recovery Operations Director will organize side-by-side grid searches for human remains. In order to ensure investigation of all assigned cases, the Recovery Operations Director shall ensure that the Recovery Teams follow all State of Louisiana ESF 8 LDH's policies and procedures and maintain detailed records of recovery team assignments and accomplishments.

2.2.2 Recovery Operations Director Assistant

Should there be a need an Assistant Recovery Operations Director shall be appointed to assist the Director in his duties. An Assistant may be needed if recovery operations run twenty-four hours a day, if the recovery operations ensue for an extended of time, or if the volume of recoveries is such that the Recovery Operations Director needs assistance maintaining paperwork and team assignments.

2.2.3 Recovery Team Dispatcher

A Recovery Team Dispatcher may be needed when there is a high volume of reported missing cases to investigate and/or large numbers of reported sightings of deceased bodies. As necessary to assist the Recovery Operations Director, a dispatcher may be assigned to directly communicate with Recovery Team Leaders when assigning recovery missions and answering questions.

2.2.4 Recovery Safety Officer

The Safety Officer is in charge of ensuring that all recovery teams have appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) and maintain a safe working environment. See [Safety](#) section below. In large or difficult recovery efforts, each recovery team can have a Safety Officer Designee to directly support the recovery teams in the field. The Safety Officer or designees should always monitor the well being of recovery personnel. Considerations should include:

- Hydration (ensuring the teams have proper levels of drinking water)
- Nutrition (e.g., suggesting recovery teams keep energy bars or similar on hand)
- Proper rest
- Physical hindrances (e.g. ,recent injuries or surgery)

- Emotional/mental condition

2.3 Documentation

The Recovery Report Log (see [Recovery Tasking Form: Attachment B](#)) shall be used to record the date and time of recovery, the Field or Recovery number assigned in the field, a brief description of the remains, the location (by address, grid location, etc.) of the recovery, GPS Coordinates of the recovery, and the Recovery Team performing the recovery. All recovery documents must be completed at the time of recovery, and all documentation must be retained according the standard procedures used by the State of Louisiana ESF 8 LDH.

2.4 Staging Area

The staging area is a location for the recovery teams to gather their assignments, prepare for their missions, and re-group following each mission. This area may be at the morgue, a [transfer site](#) (see below), or other location based on the specifics of the incident. Ideally the staging area will have the following features:

- Restroom facilities
- Rest area (climate controlled when possible)
- Work area (to complete recovery documentation)
- Electricity and running water

The staging area will require supplies and equipment that may not be used in other areas of recovery operations. Below is a list of equipment and supplies for the staging area:

- Water and/or sports drinks
- Snacks and meals (when travel away from recovery site is restricted or impractical)
- Restroom supplies
- Basic first aid supplies
- Recovery forms
- Field office equipment and supplies:
 - Laptop with standard MS Office software or other word processing software
 - All-in-one printer/scanner/fax/copier
 - Office supplies (e.g., pens, paper clips, paper)

See [Attachment C](#) for a complete list of supplies and equipment.

2.5 Transport Vehicles

All vehicles used in the recovery operations shall be properly maintained and carry the necessary insurance for use.

2.5.1 *Transportation of Human Remains*

During the transportation and storage of human remains, body bags shall be placed flat on the floor of the vehicle, end-to-end, side-by-side, and in a single layer. Human remains shall never, under any circumstances, be stacked one on top of the other. As appropriate, vans, bobtail trucks (or similar vehicles), and refrigerated trailers shall be used to transport human remains.

2.5.2 *Vehicle Specifications for Transporting Human Remains*

The numbers and types of vehicles required by the recovery effort will be determined based on incident specifics. Determining factors may include:

- Number or estimated number of remains (included fragmented remains)
- Geographical area of incident site
- Number of recovery personnel available
- Terrain and other potential problems affecting recovery process
- Distance from recovery site to morgue
- Availability of vehicles

Vans

Vans should have:

- Back seats removed
- No carpeting or the carpeting covered with plastic
- No windows or the windows heavily tinted or blacked out
- No company names/logos visible on the outside of vehicle (cover if necessary)

Bobtail Trucks

Bobtail trucks should have:

- Refrigeration (when possible)
- Non-porous flooring
- Lift gate (when possible)
- Interior lighting (when possible)
- No company names/logos visible on the outside of vehicle (cover if necessary)

Refrigerated Trailers

Refrigerated trailers shall be used as needed to store bodies and transport bodies to the morgue. See [Transfer Site](#) section for more details on the specifications of refrigerated trailers.

2.5.3 Transportation of Recovery Personnel

Because vehicles designated for the transport of human remains will be limited in passenger capacity (typically 2-3 passengers), vans, SUVs and other passenger vehicles will be needed to transport recovery team personnel

2.5.4 Convoys

Incident-specific conditions, the number of recovery team personnel, and vehicle availability at the time of transport all determine personnel vehicle needs. Before leaving on a recovery mission, the designated driver of each vehicle should inspect the vehicles to ensure there is sufficient fuel for the mission, and if necessary, address any other vehicle-related issues that may impede the mission. The Team Commander must also possess the appropriate equipment to contact a representative if necessary (e.g., cell phone, radio).

The mission route should be clearly understood by all team members in the event the convoy inadvertently becomes separated. All efforts should be made to prevent vehicles from becoming separated en route to the recovery site. Should the convoy become separated, immediate communication must be established and maintained until reunited. Convoy escorts should be provided if needed to ensure the safety of the recovery personnel or to help the convoy navigate through traffic.

2.6 Safety

2.6.1 Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

Recovery operations shall not begin until all necessary PPE has been procured and distributed to recovery team members and the team members are adequately trained in the proper use of their PPE. Recovery teams must ensure there is adequate PPE at all times during a mission and resupply as needed. The Recovery Safety Officer will determine the level of PPE.

Used and contaminated PPE must be properly disposed of through the use of biohazard bags or boxes. If disposing of PPE in the field is a problem, the PPE can be transported to the morgue along with the human remains for proper disposal.

PPE may include, but is not limited to:

- Eye protection (e.g., goggles, protective glasses, face shields/hoods)
- Masks (can be simple N95 masks or reusable filtered respirator depending on circumstances and requirements)
- Gowns or protective suits
- Shoe covers
- Steel toe/shank boots
- Hard/safety hats (when needed)
- Gloves (latex and or thick work gloves depending on circumstances)
- Sun screen
- Insect repellent
- Other incident-specific PPE

See [Attachment C](#) for a complete list of supplies and equipment.

2.6.2 *Lifting Techniques*

To avoid back and other physical injuries, recovery team personnel shall follow a lifting procedure that minimizes injury. For example:

1. *Plan before lifting:* Plan and clear a path. In order to prevent awkward movements while moving human remains, ensure that other team member(s) assisting with the recovery understand the plan.
2. *Lift close to the body:* Team members should have a firm hold on the remains or body bag and keep the body/bag close to their body. This will ensure stability and balance while lifting.
3. *Keep your feet shoulder-width apart:* Feet should be shoulder-width apart, and team members should only take short steps when moving the remains. Moving and balancing will be difficult when feet are too close together or too far apart.
4. *Bend your knees and straighten your back:* Always bend at the knees and focus on keeping your back straight when lifting. Practice the lifting motion before lifting the remains to ensure proper technique.

5. *Tighten your stomach muscles:* Tightening the abdominal muscles will hold the back in a good lifting position and will help prevent excessive force on the spine.
6. *Lift with your legs:* The leg muscles are much stronger than back muscles. Lifting with the legs places much less strain on the back, requires less energy, and helps to stabilize the remains.
7. *If you're having difficulty lifting, then get help:* If a deceased individual is too heavy, is in an awkward position, or in a difficult location, a team member should secure a sufficient number of additional personnel to assist with the recovery.

2.6.3 *Surroundings/Potential Hazards:*

The Recovery Team shall always be aware of potential hazards at or near the recovery. Hazards may include:

- Water: high water and or moving water
- Heat: from the sun or smoldering embers from fire
- Sharp objects
- Uneven or unsafe terrain
- Animals/insects
- Unstable structures
- Disgruntled family members/public
- Biohazards
- Contaminated human remains

2.7 Numbering

Numbering recovered human remains and associated personnel effects (PE) is vital to the identification process. Data collected at the scene must be associated with the human remains and/or personal effects from the recovery site and transported to the morgue. Separating recovery data from its respective human remains or personal effects can lead to a delay in identification, misidentification, or a body that remains unidentified. The size and scope of the incident, as well as the number of search and recovery personnel and teams, will dictate the numbering method and system.



A simple numbering system mitigates errors. The more complex the numbering system, the greater the chance there will be errors in recorded numbers. Long numbers, involving a series of numbers and letters, can be easily transposed.

Spray paint is an easy and inexpensive way to label body bags so procuring a sufficient supply at the onset of the response is advisable.

2.7.1 Recovery Number

A unique Recovery Number shall be assigned and affixed to each set of human remains, partial remains, and personal effects. The Recovery Number should then be noted on the VIP Recovery Form (see [Attachment D](#)). The VIP Recovery Form will accompany the remains from the scene to the morgue.

The Recovery Number may be assigned at the actual site of recovery as long as duplicate numbers are not assigned to multiple recovery sites. Where the chance for duplication of a recovery number is highly probable, as is the case in larger incidents where the geographical area is extensive OR when there are multiple transfer sites, then the recovery number will be assigned at the transfer site. In these situations, a Field Number (see [below](#)) will be assigned at the actual recovery site and the Recovery Number assigned at the transfer site.

The Recovery Number shall be affixed to the actual human remains, the PE, or the body bag and noted on the recovery documentation.

With multiple transfer sites, a prefix should be included as a part of the Recovery Number. The prefix indicates the transfer site where the remains were processed.

EXAMPLE: If there are four transfer sites, site one should have the prefix or "01", site two the prefix of "02," and so on. In this example, the first recovery recorded at transfer site one would be "01-00001." The twenty-second recovery recorded at transfer site four would be "04-00022."

2.7.2 *Field Number*

In incidents where the geographical area of the incident site is large, there are multiple recovery teams spread out over the site, and/or there are multiple transfer sites, a Field Number will associate the Recovery Form with the recovered remains. Once the remains reach the transfer site, a Recovery Number will be assigned.

This Field Number can be as simple as “1, 2, 3...” or “A, B, C...” as long as the number is documented both on the recovery form and the recovered remains. Proper labeling ensures a clear association between the documentation and the remains. Because the Field Number will be replaced by a Recovery Number at the transfer site, the Field Number should be affixed to the body bag rather than the actual remains or personal effects.

2.7.3 *The Triple Check Method*

Whether affixing a Field Number or Recovery Number, a tagging policy and procedure shall be used to help help minimize/eliminate the possibility of incorrectly numbering a body bag and documentation. The following method has been used successfully by DMORT in the past:

1. Once the human remains, partial remains, or personal effects have been properly placed in a body bag, the scribe will note the number (field or recovery) on the recovery form. The scribe will then speak that number clearly to the team member responsible for marking the body bags and human remains.
2. The team member marking the remains and body bags must repeat the number back to the scribe.
3. The scribe will once again repeat the number to the team member. This marks the third time the number has been spoken.
4. If at any time during this Triple Check process the scribe or the team member marking the remains does not repeat the number and/or is unclear about the number, the process should stop and begin again.
5. Only when the number has been spoken clearly three times and is understood by both the scribe and team member, should the number be affixed to the body bag and remains and noted on the Recovery Form.

6. At times, distractions at or near the scene can hinder the Triple Check process. Therefore, when possible and necessary, workers at or near the site may be asked to assist in lowering the noise level.
7. After the numbers have been affixed, an independent verification should ensure the same number is used on the human remains, the body bag, and the associated paperwork.

2.8 Recovery Missions

There are three types of situations that will initiate a body recovery effort. Each situation may elicit a different recovery response, and the Recovery Operations Director determines when a recovery mission occurs.

1. **Missing Persons:** The report of a missing person last seen at a specific location (e.g., “Right before the explosion, my father was on the front porch of the house.”) activates a response. Following a mass fatality event, law enforcement agencies, the Family Assistance Center, and other involved agencies will receive reports of missing persons. Typically, these reports will be investigated by the police or by representatives of the Family Assistance Center but when the reported missing cannot be found alive through investigative methods, the case will be transmitted to the Recovery Operations Director and distributed to a recovery team for an actual site investigation.
2. **Location of Specific Human Remains:** The reporting of human remains found at a particular location (e.g., “We saw a body on the sidewalk at the corner of First and Monroe Streets.”). Following a mass fatality event, law enforcement agencies, the Family Assistance Center, and other involved agencies will receive reports with locations of known deceased. These reports should be transmitted to the Recovery Operations Director and then distributed to the recovery teams.
3. **Grid Searches:** A report that human remains may be in a particular area (e.g., “The water flooded the entire east side of town, taking down houses and moving cars.”) activates a response. These searches typically involve the large scale combing of areas to find human remains by teams made up of recovery personnel, law enforcement, other first responders and recovery effort participants. These teams shall walk side-by-side at arm’s length to search for human remains and or personnel effects. When the team locates

remains, the team should stop and allow a forensic specialists or medical legal investigator to examine the remains and surrounding site. Following the procedures outlined in the [Recovery](#) section below, the specialist will perform the recovery and the grid search will continue until the team has completely searched the grid.

2.8.1 Recovery Teams

Recovery teams, when possible, should be comprised of the following:

- Team Leader
- Scribe
- Recovery Specialists (minimum 3 per team)
- Forensic/Investigative Specialists (one or more depending on the needs and availability)
 - Forensic Anthropologist
 - Forensic Odontologist
 - Forensic Pathologists
 - Medical-Legal Investigator
 - Evidence specialists
- Safety Officer
- Photographer/Videographer
- Chaplain (optional)
- Ancillary team support (if needed):
 - Urban search and rescue
 - Canine cadaver teams
 - WMD team

In situations where there are insufficient personnel to staff each position individually, team members will have multiple responsibilities. A recovery team shall never be so small that the team's safety, the accuracy and integrity of recovery data, or the ability to respectfully recover the human remains is compromised. Once in the field, recovery team members should never separate unless it becomes absolutely necessary. If a recovery team must split up, they should stay in constant communication for safety and accountability purposes.

2.8.1.1 Team Leader

Team Leaders report to the Recovery Operations Director, Recovery Operations Assistant Director, State of Louisiana ESF 8 LDH, Fatality Management Branch Chief or others depending



on the incident command structure established for a particular incident (see [Incident Command Structure](#)).

Team Leaders:

- Are responsible for all actions related to recovery team activities
- Ensure that Recovery Team members follow Recovery Procedures
- Will receive assignments from the Recovery Operations Director, address any known or perceived safety issues with the team's Safety Officer, plan the travel route, and then, once prepared, lead recovery team in the field
- Can serve as a working supervisor, participating in the actual recovery process while supervising the team

2.8.1.2 Scribe

The Scribe will record data on the associated VIP Recovery Form (See [Attachment D](#)) and assign either a Field Number or Recovery Number for each recovered remains or PE. The Scribe must:

- Have neat and legible handwriting
- Be familiar with all recovery documentation forms
- Be thorough in documenting recoveries
- Ensure that the same field or recovery number assigned to a particular recovery is noted on both the remains and on the associated Recovery Form
- Take the appropriate time to complete recovery documentation thoroughly and not allow themselves to be rushed or make mistakes
- Ensure that the Recovery Form is transported with the associated human remains to the transfer point or the morgue

2.8.1.3 Recovery Specialists

Recovery Teams shall have three to four Recovery Specialists who will lift the human remains, place the remains and/or personnel effects in body bags, and tag (number) the bags appropriately. Human remains shall be placed face up in body bags with only one set of remains or partial remains per bag. The remains and bag must be tagged with the appropriate field or recovery number. **NOTE:** *This facet of the recovery process shall be completed with the utmost respect and dignity.*

Recovery Specialists should be physically fit and able to lift human remains. Human remains can be heavy and/or in awkward positions or locations. Recovery Specialists may also have to work in serious and difficult conditions. Because of the physical requirement, Recovery Specialists

should be screened on medical or other conditions that may impair their job performance. It is important to know whether a potential Recovery Specialist has any limitations associated with:

- Medical conditions (e.g. blood pressure, blood sugar)
- Inadequate rest
- Inadequate nutrition or hydration
- Medications
- Injuries that may preclude field work (e.g. recent surgeries, sprains/strains)
- Impaired vision

This prescreening will help protect the Recovery Specialist as well as the other members of the team.

2.8.1.4 Forensic/Investigative Specialists

Specialists in forensic human identification disciplines and/or those with medical/legal investigative experience shall also participate in each recovery team as appropriate. The availability of specialists dictates who will be included on the Recovery Team. Likewise, incident specific issues may dictate which specialists are needed. Forensic specialists, as well as specialists with medical/legal investigative backgrounds, are the most beneficial in the field due to their experience with scene investigation, proper documentation technique, and ability to provide useful data.

2.8.1.5 Safety Officer

Prior to a recovery mission, the Safety Officer will brief all team members on specific safety issues known at the time and any suspected potential issues. The Safety Officer must monitor Recovery Team activities and watch for potential safety hazards, unsafe conditions or activities that may cause harm to a team member. Recovery Team member safety overrides all other concerns, and Recovery Team members should never be put in harm's way when performing their duties. If there is ever a question as to safety, and if it is not completely clear that the recovery team should proceed, then work should halt until the issue(s) has been resolved.

Where it is not possible to have a designated Safety Officer, the duties of a Safety Officer should be assigned to one of the other team members as collateral duty. Safety is the responsibility of



all team members. If a team member identifies a safety concern, they must bring it to the attention of the Safety Officer or the Team Leader immediately.

Should any incident occur in the field (e.g. accident, unsafe behavior by team members), the Safety Officer will complete and file an Incident Report (see [Attachment E](#)) and pass it along to the Team Leader. The Team Leader will review the Incident Report and file with the Recovery Operations Director.

2.8.1.6 Photographer/Videographer

Digital photographs should be taken of all recoveries. When possible, video footage (without sound) of recoveries should be taken as well. If a recovery mission does not result in the finding of human remains, photographs of the area may assist in future investigations.

Suggestion for digital photography:

- Take close up and wide angle shots of the scene
- Take multiple shots of the remains/personal effects from various angles
- Minimize presence of scene personnel in photographs
- Keep photograph log, including coordinates and landmarks

Suggestions for video footage:

- Mute audio
- Take close up and wide angle shots of scene
- Minimize presence of scene personnel in video
- Keep video log, including coordinates and landmarks; panoramic shoots are especially helpful

2.8.1.7 Chaplain

This position is optional and may depend on the specific incident and/or the availability of individuals to fill the position. In previous mass fatality incidents (e.g., 9/11 and Hurricanes Katrina/Rita), chaplains have been embedded in the Recovery Teams and would honor the deceased by saying a prayer over each recovery. The 9/11 Recovery Prayer, written during the recovery effort in New York City, was designed to be nonsectarian in belief.

9/11 Recovery Prayer

"We give thanks for this person's life.

We give thanks that this person was found.

We give thanks for the persons that found them.

We ask that they may be made whole in God's arms,

And that they know peace"

Once human remains have been placed into a body bag, the remains and body bag properly numbered, and all documentation complete, the Recovery Team should pause and allow the chaplain the opportunity to say a prayer.

Interviews with family members from past mass fatality response efforts has shown that families find great solace in knowing that someone took the time to honor their deceased loved one.

2.8.1.8 Ancillary Team Support (as needed)

Urban Search and Rescue

An urban search and rescue team may be needed in areas where there are collapsed structures. The weak structural integrity of a damaged building may prevent recovery until heavy equipment teams are able to minimize safety risks.

Canine Cadaver Team

When human remains are buried in the rubble of buildings or other structures, it may be difficult, if not impossible, to visually locate them. Specially trained cadaver dogs can be brought in to help with the search process. **NOTE:** *If cadaver dogs are used, there will need to be adequate veterinary support.*

WMD Team

Chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear (CBRNE) events require the assistance of resources to decontaminate human remains, either prior to recovery or after they have been transported to the morgue, but before post-mortem examination. WMD teams are specifically trained to handle and decontaminate human remains for processing in the morgue.

2.8.2 Recovery Procedures

2.8.2.1 Preparation

The Recovery Operations Director should complete a Recovery Tasking Form (see [Attachment B](#)) based on the reported locations of missing individuals or reports of human remains. The Recovery Operations Director will assign one or more Recovery Task Forms to a Recovery Team Leader.

Once the Team Leader receives a Recovery Tasking Form from the Recovery Operations Director, he/she will:

- Determine the location of the assignment
- Determine an appropriate route to the location
- Discuss any possible safety concerns with the team's Safety Officer
- Brief the team on the mission
- Ensure the team has adequate communications equipment

The Safety Officer will:

- Discuss and address any safety concerns with Team Leader and the team
- Ensure there is adequate personal protective equipment (PPE) for the team
- Ensure there is an adequate supply of water/ sports drinks, as well as other nutritional items
- Discuss possible replacements of Recovery Team members deemed unfit to proceed with the Team Leader

Before leaving on a recovery mission, the Transport Driver (see [Convoy](#) section) will:

- Ensure there is sufficient fuel for vehicle
- Address any issues that may impact vehicle performance during the mission

2.8.2.2 Recovery

Once on site, the team will either begin to search for the reported missing or the reported human remains. If no human remains or human remain fragments are found, then the Scribe or



designate Recovery Team member will prepare a report detailing the search effort. Photographs should be taken and attached to the report. The Recovery Team Leader shall review the report before being submitted to the Recovery Operations Director.

The Recovery Team should stay together at all times. A team should only separate under the direction of the Team Leader and only when safety measures can be maintained. Should a Recovery Team member become inadvertently separated from the rest of the team, the team leader and safety officer should be notified immediately and efforts should be made to locate the missing team member. A tremendous amount of time and resources are wasted if a team has to constantly search for team members who repeatedly separate themselves from the group.

NOTE: *If the team member's separation was intentional and/or habitual, then that team member will be relieved of his/her duties and an appropriate replacement should be identified.*

When the Recovery Team locates human remains (including fragmented remains and/or personal effects), the Recovery Team shall follow the procedures detailed below:

- Scribe or appointed member of the Recovery Team completes as much of the Recovery Form (see [Attachment D](#)) as possible
- Still pictures and video (when video is utilized) should be taken of the remains and/or PE, the location of the recovery (both close up and of the entire area), and anything else that may lead to an identification
- Place human remains in a body bag face up
- Affix either a field number or recovery number to the human remains and the body bag using the Triple Check method; this number must be noted on the Recovery Form
- OPTIONAL: This is the appropriate time to pause and allow a Chaplain to participate
- Carefully and respectfully place remains in the transport vehicle and transport remains to either a transfer site or directly to the morgue
- Personnel effects directly associated with (attached to) the body (e.g., wallets, jewelry) should NOT be removed from the deceased at the site but transported with the body to the morgue
- Personal effects not directly associated with the body should be bagged separately and the location of the items in association with any nearby human remains should be documented on the recovery form

2.8.2.2.1 Fragmentation/Co-mingling

Where there is body fragmentation and there are numerous disarticulated body parts to be collected, comingling of remains can be an issue. If possible, separating these body parts in the field is preferable and will aid in the identification process. Any separation should be thoroughly documented on the recovery form.

2.8.2.2.2 Determining if the Remains are Human

There may be situations where non-human bones and other tissue may be found among human remains. Forensic expertise in the field facilitates the identification and collection of human remains among non-human material and prevents the transport of unwanted non-human material to the morgue.

2.8.2.2.3 Evidence Collection and Documentation

All recoveries (including both human remains and personal effects) must be performed and documented properly and completely. All recoveries should be treated as potential forensic criminal evidence. This protects the integrity of the recovery and associated data and ensures that all human remains are treated with dignity and care. A complete chain of custody must be maintained at all times during the recovery and transport process.

2.8.2.2.4 Age, Sex, and Race Determination

The sex, estimated age, and race of the human remains can be determined or presumed in the field after a cursory examination by a forensic identification expert (pathologist or anthropologist). Any identifier determined or presumed in the field can potentially assist in the recovery effort, particularly if multiple bodies have been reported at a particular location. This information should be documented on the Recovery Form.

2.8.2.2.5 Scene Investigation:

Trained investigators will examine the scene for any evidence that may indicate a presumptive identification. Indicators found at the scene of a recovery will often point towards a possible identification, thus assisting later in the identification process.

2.8.2.3 Post Recovery

Once the recovered human remains have been safely and respectfully transported to a transfer site or directly to the morgue:

- Team Leaders should ensure completion of all associated documentation generated in the field before submitting documentation to the Recovery Operations Director
- The Recovery Operations Director will document all recovered remains and personnel effects on the Remains Recovery Log (see [Attachment F](#))
- Team Leaders will brief the Recovery Operations Director (or Assistant Director) on urgent issues requiring the immediate attention of the Director and/or their superiors
- The Safety Officer will discuss any issues with the Team Leader, and when appropriate, complete an Incident Report (see [Attachment E](#))
- If necessary, Recovery Team members should seek medical attention before beginning another mission
- As appropriate, the Recovery Team Leader or Recovery Operations Director/Assistant Director shall review the performance of each Recovery Team member and address issues
- In order to continue safely onto the next recovery mission, team members should utilize the down time to rest, hydrate, and eat
- Once the Recovery Team has recuperated, the Team Leader should report to the Recovery Operations Director to receive a new recovery mission or to be placed on standby until the establishment of a new mission

2.9 Transfer Site

It is necessary to establish one or more transfer sites when it is not practical to transport the deceased human remains directly to the morgue from the recovery site. Refrigerated trailers will hold remains and personnel effects until they can be transported to the morgue.

2.9.1 Location:

The Transfer Site(s) should be established at secure locations (or locations that can be made secure) away from the public and media. It is preferable to utilize a covered loading dock or other large open indoor facility. The use of an open site with a temporary covering (using PVC poles and tarpaulins) will help prevent outsiders from observing transfer site activities from any angle

(including the air). All access points to the Transfer Site should be controlled. Only authorized personnel should be allowed entry.

The site should be easily accessible by recovery vehicles with enough room to enter, off-load, turn around, park overnight (if needed), and exit. Additionally there must be sufficient room to move the refrigerated trailers in and out of the site. During non-operational hours, the facility must be secured, trailer doors locked, and guards positioned at the entry/exit points.

2.9.2 Condition of the Site

Because the Transfer Site will serve as temporary holding facility for individuals who have lost their lives due to the mass fatality event, the State of Louisiana ESF 8 DHH must ensure that the transfer site is clean and organized. Site cleanliness and organization is an important indicator of respect for the human remains and surviving family members.

2.9.3 Safety:

2.9.3.1 PPE

PPE will be used at all times when handling the remains or when working in or around the refrigerated trailers. There must sufficient PPE for the personnel and visitors at the Transfer Site and additional supplies should be kept in stock.

2.9.3.2 First Aid

The site should have a first aid kit available at the site (at a minimum) and a medic (e.g. paramedic, nurse) on site when possible.

2.9.3.3 Lifting issues

Proper lifting techniques must be utilized with moving human remains in and out of recovery vehicles and refrigerated trailers. See previous [lifting instructions](#). Loading docks improves the process of moving bodies in and out of trailers. If a loading dock is unavailable, a ramp can be constructed and placed at the end of the trailers. A ramp helps to facilitate entry and exit and reduces the strain on personnel who transfer the bodies.

2.9.3.4 Lighting

Adequate lighting ensures good visibility in and around the site. If necessary, pole lighting can be installed.

2.9.4 Personnel

2.9.4.1 Transfer Site Supervisor

The Transfer Site Supervisor is responsible for all transfer site activities, including:

- Receiving human remains/PE
- Ensuring all recovery forms are complete and legible
- Ensuring remains/personal effects are placed in trailers correctly
- Maintaining complete and accurate records on the Trailer Manifest (See attachments [G](#), [H](#), [I](#), and [J](#))
- Maintaining the Trailer Manifest
- Maintaining security, including the locking of trailers during non-operations hours
- Maintaining complete paperwork for transport to morgue
- Ensuring a trailer door tag is affixed prior to transport to morgue
- Ensuring company names and/or logos located on the sides of trailers are covered
- Ensuring safe transfer conditions
- Maintaining an adequate reserve of blank copies of all forms, equipment, and supplies
- Working with security to establish security procedures for the site

2.9.4.2 Transfer Site Specialists

The Transfer Site Specialists are responsible for:

- Assisting recovery personnel with the off-loading of remains
- The correct placement of remains in trailers
- Assisting Transfer Site Supervisor with paperwork as needed
- Keeping transfer site clean and free of debris
- Accurately numbering body bags

2.9.4.3 Transfer Site Scribe (optional)

If large volumes of human remains/personal effects arrive at the transfer site, a Transfer Site Scribe can assist the Supervisor with paperwork. Scribe tasks include:

- Ensuring completeness and legibility on recovery forms
- Recording human remains on the appropriate “Trailer Manifest”
- Ensuring all paperwork is complete for transport to the morgue

2.9.5 Security

As long as the site is active, security will be provided 24 hours a day. Only visitors with official business and the proper credentials can be admitted to the site. Security personnel responsibilities include:

- Controlling entry points into the site
- Conducting routine patrols during non-operational hours
- Ensuring refrigerated trailers are locked during non-operational hours
- Contacting the proper authority should one the refrigeration units malfunction

NOTE: *Security personnel must be provided emergency contact numbers for use during an emergency, particularly an emergency requiring immediate attention from the relevant Supervisor (e.g. human remains brought in by an individual or agency not affiliated with State of Louisiana ESF 8 DHH's Recovery Team OR refrigeration unit failure).*

2.9.6 Transfer Site Procedures

2.9.6.1 Morning Routine

- Site Supervisor checks with Security to establish security and learn of any issues
- Unlock refrigerated trailers
- Check temperatures on all trailers to ensure overnight acceptable temperatures
- Check and top off fuel levels
- Contact Maintenance personnel for refrigeration unit-related issues
- Site Supervisor relates any pertinent information to Recovery Operations Director
- Prepare to receive remains
- Check site for debris and clutter

NOTE: *If information is time sensitive and there is no time to relate information to the Recovery Teams via the Recovery Operations Director, then information may be conveyed directly to the Recovery Teams. Either way, the Recovery Operations Director must be briefed for situational awareness.*

2.9.6.2 Receiving Human Remains/PE

- Park recovery vehicles park in appropriate location
- Recovery personnel provides Recovery Form to Site Supervisor or designee
- Site Supervisor reviews Recovery Form for completeness and legibility
- Off-load human remains

- If a Recovery Number (see [Numbering](#) Section) was affixed in the field, ensure the number on the body bag and the Recovery Form match. **NOTE:** *If there is a discrepancy in the Recovery Number (e.g., number on Recovery Form does not match number on body bag), rectify the discrepancy immediately with Recovery Team personnel.*
- Once verified, ensure the Recovery Number is clearly marked on the body bag. **NOTE:** *When necessary, place human remains in a new body bag to ensure Recovery Number is clearly marked.*
- If a Field Number was assigned to the recovery, then a Recovery Number should be assigned to replace the Field Number
- Log recovery into the Trailer Manifest (see Attachments [G](#), [H](#), [I](#), and [J](#))
- OPTIONAL: At this point, a chaplain can preside over the remains again
- Place remains in the refrigerated trailer based on the location dictated by the Trailer Manifest

2.9.6.3 Evening Routine

- Lock all refrigerated trailer
- Secure paperwork and other Transfer Site-related supplies and equipment
- Check temperature on all trailers to ensure acceptable temperatures; contact maintenance personnel as needed
- Check fuel levels on refrigerated units and refuel as necessary
- Inform security personnel when all Transfer Site personnel have left for the day

2.9.6.4 Transport of Human Remains to the Morgue

Once a refrigerated trailer is full and ready for transport:

- Verify completion of all documentation
- Contact morgue and request driver
- Attach plastic locking tab to trailer doors and record number on Trailer Manifest
- Make hard copies of Recovery Forms and Trailer Manifest OR scan copies
- Driver will arrive at the Transfer Site with an empty trailer
- Place Recovery Forms and Trailer Manifest in folder and give to driver
- Driver will drive the full trailer to the morgue

2.9.7 Transfer Site Equipment/Supplies

See [Attachment C](#) for a complete list of equipment and supplies for the Transfer Site(s).



2.9.8 *Transfer Site Trailers*

Refrigerated trailers will be used to hold remains until they can be transported to the morgue. 53-foot trailers are typically used to hold the remains. However, trailers of other sizes can also be used if necessary. The table below details the approximate number of remains that can be held in refrigerated trailers based on size:

Trailer Size	Approximate Storage Capacity (# of Remains)
40'	18
48'	21
53' (3-wide)	21
53' (4-wide)	28

The Transfer Site Supervisor will assign a specific location in the refrigerated trailer to each body bag and will note the Recovery Number on the trailer manifest. See Attachments [G](#), [H](#), [I](#), and [J](#) for trailer manifests.

2.9.8.1 *Fuel and Maintenance*

Refrigerated trailers require constant attention. Although the trailers will remain in place, the refrigerated units still require fuel to operate. Trailers must remain fueled at all times and will, on occasion, require maintenance. To avoid the possibility of a trailer running out of fuel, the Transfer Site should keep sufficient fuel on hand. Alternatively, the contract for the trailer rental can include refueling services. If the contractor will refuel trailers, the Site Supervisor shall work with the contractor to set up a mechanism for efficient and effective refueling. Additionally, as with the vehicles used to recover bodies, names and/or logos of private companies (e.g. grocery store, retail store) must be securely covered up with black plastic sheeting and duct tape. Because the trailers may travel on the highway, the coverings should be secured enough to withstand high speeds.



Sample Forms and Documents

- Attachment A: Daily Recovery Team Roster
- Attachment B: Recovery Tasking Form
- Attachment C: Equipment and Supplies
- Attachment D: VIP Recovery Form
- Attachment E: Incident Report
- Attachment F: Recovery Log
- Attachment G: 40' Trailer Manifest
- Attachment H: 48' Trailer Manifest
- Attachment I: 53' Trailer Manifest (Three Wide)
- Attachment J: 53' Trailer Manifest (Four Wide)



Recovery Operations: Attachment A

DAILY RECOVERY TEAM ROSTER

Team # _____

Date: ____/____/____

Team Leader

Recovery Specialists

Name/Agency _____

Names/Agencies _____

Cell# _____ Alternate # _____

Cell# _____ Alternate # _____

Email _____

Email _____

Safety Officer

Specialty: _____

Name/Agency _____

Name/Agency _____

Cell# _____ Alternate # _____

Cell# _____ Alternate # _____

Email _____

Email _____

Scribe

Specialty: _____

Name/Agency _____

Name/Agency _____

Cell# _____ Alternate # _____

Cell# _____ Alternate # _____

Email _____

Email _____

Photographer/Video

Specialty: _____

Name/Agency _____

Name/Agency _____

Cell# _____ Alternate # _____

Cell# _____ Alternate # _____

Email _____

Email _____

Chaplain

Specialty: _____

Name/Agency _____

Name/Agency _____

Cell# _____ Alternate # _____

Cell# _____ Alternate # _____

Email _____

Email _____

Recovery Specialist

Specialty: _____

Name/Agency _____

Name/Agency _____

Cell# _____ Alternate # _____

Cell# _____ Alternate # _____

Email _____

Email _____



Recovery Operations: Attachment B

RECOVERY TASKING FORM

☐ Missing Person

☐ Report of Deceased

Date: _____ Time: _____ Task # _____

Reported by: _____

(NAME – AGENCY-CONTACT INFORMATION)

Assigned to:

Team: _____ Team Leader: _____ Contact # _____
(TEAM DESIGNATION) (NAME) (CELL NUMBER)

Assigned by: _____ Agency: _____
(NAME-CONTACT NUMBER) (AGENCY NAME)

Missing person/Deceased: (IF UNKNOWN ENTER UNK.)

Name: _____ Sex: _____ Age: _____ Height: _____
Weight: _____ Race: _____ Clothing: _____
Hair color: _____ Hair length: _____ Eye color: _____
Other: _____
(SCARS-BIRTHMARKS-TATTOOS-OTHER IDENTIFIERS)

Location of deceased:

Address: _____
(ADDRESS OR PHYSICAL LOCATION)

GSP Coordinates: _____ Type of structure: _____
(e.g. RESIDENCE/BUILDING/FIELD)

On site contact: _____
(NAME AND NUMBER)

Directions and Other Additional information:

(NOTE: If no remains are located, a description of the search and findings should be documented)

Recovery Operations: Attachment C

EQUIPMENT AND SUPPLIES

- Office furniture
 - Tables
 - Chairs
- IT Equipment
 - Laptop-w/ VIP, Microsoft Office suite
 - All In one copier/scanner/fax/printer
 - Copy paper
 - Ink cartridge refills
 - Multimedia card reader (if not built into computers)
- PPE
 - Tyvek Coveralls-size S, M, L, XXL
 - Disposable surgeon caps and/or bouffant caps
 - Gloves-Microflex Nitrile and/or Latex Gloves S, M, L, XL
 - Heavy rubber gloves
 - Disposable ear loop surgeon's Masks
 - Disposable ear loop surgeon's face mask with built in face shield
 - Full face shield w/ foam forehead cushion
 - N95 Respirator Masks
 - Shoe covers
 - Boot covers with ties
 - Safety glasses
 - Full face shield
- Body bags
 - Adult body bags-20MIL Extra Heavy Duty
 - Infant pouch
 - Pediatric pouch
- Toe tags
 - Paper toe tags
 - Plastic wrist/ankle tags
 - Aluminum toe tags
- Body bag marking/labeling
 - White or orange spray paint
 - Paper or aluminum tags
 - Silver or Gold art pan
- Evidence bags



- Paper and or plastic evidence bags
 - Bag marking instruments
- Biohazard waste disposal
 - 5 Gal. Biohazard bags
 - Bag ties
 - Biohazard waste labels
- Hand sanitizer
 - Liquid, foam or gel sanitizer in bottle
 - Sanitizing wipes
 - Sanitizing spray
- Office supplies/forms
 - Recovery forms
 - Trailer Manifest forms
 - Pens-black or blue
 - Sharpies (various colors)
 - Paper clips-large size
 - 2" binder clips
 - Rubber bands
 - Stapler w/ staples
 - Scissors
 - Transparent tape
 - Letter size file folders
 - 9" X 12" Manila envelopes
 - 11" X 13" Manila envelopes
 - Clip boards
 - 8 ½" X 11" plastic sleeves
 - Computer cleaning supplies
- Communications
 - Cellular phones
 - 2-way radios
 - Satellite phones (when interruption in cell and land line phone service)
- Lighting
 - Flashlights w/ extra batteries
 - Pole lighting (or similar) to light Staging area for working during nighttime hours.
 - Extension chords
- Temporary covering materials (as needed)
 - PVC piping



- Tarpaulins
 - Opaque plastic sheeting
 - Duct tape
 - Rope/heavy twine
 - Cinder blocks (to weight covering down)
- Site cleaning and maintenance
 - Brooms and mops
 - Dust pans (large)
 - Garbage bags (heavy duty)
 - Garbage bag ties
 - Garbage cans (large)
 - Liquid cleaning detergent or similar
 - Liquid bleach
 - Pressure washer (as needed)
 - Water hoses (where water supply is available)
 - Shovels-flat edged
- Miscellaneous
 - Fork lift or ramps (when loading dock is not available)
 - Trailer plastic locking tags
 - Padlocks for trailers
 - Heavy jackets/coats (as needed)
 - First aid supplies
 - Sanitary water supply and/or bottled water
 - AC power supply or 10kw generator
 - Materials to cover company names/logos on trailers
 - Duct tape
 - Opaque plastic sheeting
 - Tarpaulins
 - Rope/heavy twine



VIP RECOVERY FORM

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Recovery Operations: Attachment E

EXAMPLE INCIDENT REPORT

Information about the person involved in the incident:			
Full Name:			Gender M F
Home Address:			
Home Phone:	Cell Phone:	Email:	
Agency:		Title:	
Supervisors Name:			Phone Number:
Information about the incident:			
Date:	Time:		
Location:			
Police notified: Yes No	Name of PD:	Case #	
Injuries involved: Yes No	Specify:		
Was medical treatment needed: Yes No Refused		Specify:	
If so, where provided: On Site Hospital Other		Specify:	
Specifics of incident (how, where, who, etc...)			
Witnesses:			
Name:	Agency:	Contact info:	
Name:	Agency:	Contact info:	
Name:	Agency:	Contact info:	
Reporter information (person completing Incident Report)			
Name:		Date:	Time:
Agency:		Title:	
Telephone:		Email:	



State of Louisiana Mass Fatality Operational Response Plan

Signature:

Recovery Operations: Attachment F

REMAINS RECOVERY LOG

Remains Received Date/Time	Field/Recovery Number	Remains Description	Recovery Location (Grid, address, etc.)	GPS Coordinates	Recovered by (Team #)



Recovery Operations: Attachment G

40' REFRIGERATED TRAILER MANIFEST

Trailer #: _____ License #: _____

1. _____ 2. _____

3. _____ 4. _____

5. _____ 6. _____

7. _____ 8. _____

9. _____ 10. _____

11. _____ 12. _____

13. _____ 14. _____

15. _____ 16. _____

17. _____ 18. _____

Driver

Name: _____ Cell #: _____

Left collection site

Date: _____ Time: _____

Locking tag identification number: _____

1	2	3
4	5	6
7	8	9
10	11	12
13	14	15
16	17	18

NOTES: _____



State of Louisiana Mass Fatality Operational Response Plan



Recovery Operations: Attachment H

48' REFRIGERATED TRAILER MANIFEST

Trailer #: _____ License #: _____

1. _____ 2. _____

3. _____ 4. _____

5. _____ 6. _____

7. _____ 8. _____

9. _____ 10. _____

11. _____ 12. _____

13. _____ 14. _____

15. _____ 16. _____

17. _____ 18. _____

19. _____ 20. _____

21. _____

Driver

Name: _____ Cell #: _____

Left collection site

Date: _____ Time: _____

Locking tag identification number: _____

1	2	3
4	5	6
7	8	9
10	11	12
13	14	15
16	17	18
19	20	21



State of Louisiana Mass Fatality Operational Response Plan

NOTES: _____



Recovery Operations: Attachment I

53' REFRIGERATED TRAILER MANIFEST (3 WIDE)

Trailer #: _____ License #: _____

1. _____ 2. _____

3. _____ 4. _____

5. _____ 6. _____

7. _____ 8. _____

9. _____ 10. _____

11. _____ 12. _____

13. _____ 14. _____

15. _____ 16. _____

17. _____ 18. _____

19. _____ 20. _____

21. _____

Driver

Name: _____ Cell #: _____

Left collection site

Date: _____ Time: _____

Locking tag identification number: _____

1	2	3
4	5	6
7	8	9
10	11	12
13	14	15
16	17	18
19	20	21

NOTES: _____



State of Louisiana Mass Fatality Operational Response Plan



Recovery Operations: Attachment J

53' REFRIGERATED TRAILER MANIFEST (4 WIDE)

Trailer #: _____ License #: _____

1. _____ 2. _____

3. _____ 4. _____

5. _____ 6. _____

7. _____ 8. _____

9. _____ 10. _____

11. _____ 12. _____

13. _____ 14. _____

15. _____ 16. _____

17. _____ 18. _____

19. _____ 20. _____

21. _____ 22. _____

23. _____ 24. _____

25. _____ 26. _____

27. _____ 28. _____

Driver

Name: _____ Cell #: _____

Left collection site

Date: _____ Time: _____

Locking tag identification number: _____

1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28

NOTES: _____



State of Louisiana Mass Fatality Operational Response Plan
