



NEWS RELEASE

ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

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Mortuary response team prepares to assist state

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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On March 3, the Alabama Department of Public Health held a workshop for the State Mortuary Operations Response Team (SMORT) at the Chilton Medical Center in Clanton.

SMORT is an organized group of 50 volunteers located throughout the state who will respond to assist the local coroner (at their request) during mass fatality events. Members of SMORT include licensed funeral directors, embalmers, coroners and emergency management personnel.

The SMORT workshop provided an opportunity for volunteers to convene and receive training regarding the use of response equipment, and to learn more about deployable morgue units. Volunteers received hands-on training in a field setting, regarding decedent processing during disasters.

"I am proud of the work that has gone into the development, training and equipping of the SMORT. With the assistance of the Chilton Medical Center, we had an excellent venue to train and set up all the equipment that the response team would use in an actual event," said Andy Mullins, Director of Operations for the Center for Emergency Preparedness at the Alabama Department of Public Health. "Because of this work, Alabama is not only prepared, but is being recognized by other states for our level of preparedness."

The SMORT is a resource for coroners who may be overwhelmed in mass fatality events. The team can deploy within a few hours, as opposed to waiting 48 to 72 hours for federal response. Currently, SMORT units are located in Cullman, Lee and Mobile Counties.

"County coroners and the Alabama Department of Forensic Sciences recognize that during a mass fatality incident there will be a great need to coordinate and execute the initial process of decedent recovery and handling in a professional manner," said Dr. Kenneth Snell, chief medical examiner for the Alabama Department of Forensic Sciences. "The SMORT provides equipment and capabilities that are invaluable assets to the citizens of Alabama and their dedication and efforts are to be commended."

Homeland Security funds were used to conduct the workshop series and to purchase some of the SMORT equipment. Public Health also provided funds to the participating agencies for

supplies, equipment and training through the Assistant to the Secretary for Preparedness and Response grant.

Doug Williams, SMORT leader said, “Five years of planning, meeting and writing with state agencies and caring, dedicated people have brought together private industry, government and volunteers to serve the people of Alabama in a disaster.”

A second workshop for the response team will be held on March 31 in Mobile. For more information on SMORT, please contact Alice Floyd at 334-206-3898 or Alice.Floyd@adph.state.al.us.

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