

When a disaster ( natural or unnatural) causes fatalities, there are resources available to assist the medical examiner or coroner in the investigative and body processing needs that result. A few of the major resources are described in this section.

Disaster Mortuary Teams (DMORT) were originally developed through a memorandum of agreement between the *National Disaster Medical System (NDMS)* and the *National Foundation for Mortuary Care (NFMC)*. Recently (effective Jan 1, 1998) , a new memorandum of understanding was developed between *NDMS* and the *National Association of Search and Rescue (NASR)*. DMORT teams can provide ASSISTANCE through: temporary morgue facilities (a fully equipped mobile morgue is available and is housed in Rockville, Maryland-- it replaces the former mobile morgue owned by NFMC, and is the primary morgue to be used by the National Transportation and Safety Board [NTSB]--the NFMC morgue is now operated on a private basis); victim identification services using latent print, pathology, odontology, anthropology, and DNA methodologies; assistance with body processing, preparation, and disposition. Teams are organized on a regional basis in the US and consist of funeral directors, medical examiners, coroners, pathologists, forensic anthropologists, medical records technicians and transcribers, finger print specialists, forensic odontologists, dental assistants, x-ray technicians, mental health specialists, computer professionals, administrative support staff, and security and investigative personnel. NDMS has a web site at <http://www.ndms.dhhs.gov> and can be contacted by phone at 1-800-USA-NDMS.

Specific information about DMORT teams, including how to join or contact for assistance at the regional level can be found at [DMORT Home Page](#) and the site contains the names and contact points for the various Regional DMORT Coordinators.

The Aviation Disaster Family Assistance Act gave the National Transportation and Safety Board (NTSB) the responsibility of aiding the families of major aircraft accidents by coordinating resources and providing support to local, state, and airline authorities involved in investigating and managing the disaster. When major air disasters occur, the medical examiner or coroner may contact NTSB's 24-hour communications center at (202) 314-6000 to initiate a response. The NTSB web site may be accessed at <http://www.nts.gov> and the Family Assistance Plan is available at <http://www.nts.gov/publictn/2000/spc0001.htm>

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) has a web site at <http://www.fema.gov> on which may be found information about various aspects of emergency management and additional information on disaster assistance.

A Standard Operating Procedure manual for Mass Disaster Management has been prepared by the National Association of Medical Examiners (NAME) as a model for medical examiner/coroner office operations and is available [HERE](#) .

Hazardous Material Teams (HAZMAT) respond to emergency situations in which hazardous materials (radiation, toxins, chemicals, biologicals etc) pose a risk. HAZMAT teams are usually attached to fire or police departments and may be organized on a city, county, regional, state, industrial, federal, military, or contract basis. The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) has standards for HAZMAT teams and the National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) certifies the protective gear/wear used by such teams. In many instances, HAZMAT teams may have already been brought into action by incident command by the time a medical examiner or coroner is notified of fatalities. In some instances, however, the medical examiner or coroner may find it necessary to call in a HAZMAT or similar team. Because the organization of such teams vary by region, it is prudent for medical examiners and coroners to ascertain from city, county, or state emergency management agencies the appropriate contact points required to obtain HAZMAT or similar services. At present, a specific HAZMAT web site is not available, but some related web sites may be found by performing a net search for the key word HAZMAT.