



DMORT NATIONAL NEWS

Disaster Mortuary Operational Response Team

February 2003



1



DMORT National Commander's Column

By Thomas J. Shepardson

This is the first of our newsletters for 2003 and the first opportunity we have had to share the many changes that are occurring within the DMORT Family. The first important change has been the appointment of Kevin Yeskey M.D. as the new director of the Office of Emergency Response. He has been in the public health area for many years including a very important role with the Center for Disease Control and previously for a time with the Office of Emergency Preparedness.

There have also been several resignations of team leaders in the past month. Region Three Team Leader Paul Sledzik has resigned from the position effective January 2003. Paul will be transferring from his position at the Armed Forces Institute of Pathology to the National Transportation Safety Board. We all look forward to working with Paul in his new position. Patricia Kauffman M.D. has been selected to assume the Team Leader Position for Region Three. She has been a member of the team and has been on several deployments in the past.

Fred Corral, Region Nine Team Leader has also resigned effective January 2003. John Lindstrom has agreed to assume the team leader position. John has a long history with the DMORT Program having been a member of other regional team before transferring to Region Nine. We urge everyone to support these new leaders not only in their regions but through out our system.

We all thank both Paul and Fred for the ambitious efforts they have made in the advancement of their regional teams but more importantly the many contributions they have made on a national level. They have both worked diligently in our efforts to insure the integrity of our operations.

We are also proud to have Gary Moore back as Deputy Director of OER after his bypass operation. Gary is a new person revitalized in his dedication to the advancement of OER.

The tragedy over last weekend with the space shuttle has involved the DMORT Program with yet another

It is with deep regret that we announce the death of Fred Berry Jr., Deputy Team Leader for the Region 4 DMORT team at 1:45 on Wednesday, February 12, 2003. Fred has been with the DMORT program since its inception in 1990. He has been instrumental in the advancement of the DMORT program both on deployments and in the development of operating procedures. Our thoughts and prayers go out to the Berry family. We will all cherish the many fond memories that Fred has burned in our hearts.

Friends may call on Saturday, from 4 to 8 PM at the Berry Funeral Home, Chapman Highway in Knoxville, Tennessee. Services will be held on Sunday at 2:30 PM at the Mount Olive Baptist Church, 2500 Maryville Pike, Knoxville TN. Memorial remembrances may be made to the Church Building Fund.

agency, NASA. We have been deployed from Region 6 and several WMD personnel to assist in the search for remains and evidence.

The NDMS Conference is next month in Reno, Nevada. It will be an educational experience for DMORT Members but also for the general attendees. We are bringing our new west coast cache of equipment for both display and educational talks on the work stations of the morgue. Each station will have an expert present who can answer questions of those unfamiliar with the operations during the exhibit hours. There will also be many things discussed at our team meetings including the standardization of team training this year.

There has also been discussion in recent months by many members about speaking at various functions and meetings around the country. We can not stop anyone from speaking about DMORT but, **NO ONE IS AUTHORIZED TO SPEAK ON BEHALF OF DMORT WITHOUT THE APPROVAL OF OER.** This is very important in the way the audiences perceive those speaking. John DOE can speak anywhere about anything bur John Doe can not speak for an agency without their knowledge that he is speaking and may not speak without that agency knowing the content of the presentation. No one within the DMORT Membership is ever authorized to speak on behalf of DMORT without OER knowing.

Charlotte, NC Deployment

By Christie Whitaker, Region 4
Family Assistance Core Team

On the morning of January 8, 2003 the crash of US Air flight 5481 occurred shortly after takeoff at the



DMORT NATIONAL NEWS

Disaster Mortuary Operational Response Team

February 2003



2

Charlotte International Airport in North Carolina. Nineteen passengers and two crewmembers on board the flight were killed.

The Family Assistance Core Team supported by two Information Resource team members was deployed to assist the Medical Examiner of Mecklenburg County. We also had the support of Cotton Howell, Region IV Team Leader, Scott Cromwell, MST Commander and Carol Gregory, DMORT Liaison.

Our first interviews began Thursday afternoon, interviewing three families who were on site and also conducting several phone interviews during the afternoon and evening. This entire team worked many hours that day, not leaving the Family Assistance Center until very late in the evening. Actually every day turned into long hours.

The majority of interviews were conducted by phone. Only five families came to the Family Assistance Center in Charlotte, NC. Of the twenty-one fatalities, six of the passengers were citizens of other countries. We never cease to be amazed at the diversity of the passengers on each flight and the challenges we are faced with in gathering ante-mortem data.

The Team worked diligently to secure the information needed by the medical examiner and to provide him with documents and completed records for each passenger. By Saturday afternoon we were completing follow-up interviews, finalizing data entry, auditing records and making plans to depart on Sunday. We amazed ourselves at how well we had done.

Through combined efforts and support of each other we were

successful in our work. Positive identification of all passengers had been made by the middle of the following week. Those long hours, challenging and exasperating moments took on new meaning. What a nice feeling for each of us when we learned that every family had been notified of positive identification of their loved one. A team effort and a successful mission!

Responders:

Core Team members:

Robyne Bohn Borik, Gary Daugherty, Jennie Thommen, Christie Whitaker

Information Resources:

Mike Gedert and Bob Shank

MST: Scott Cromwell and Carol Gregory

Region IV Team Leader: Cotton Howell

DMORT Dentists Evaluate Digital Dental X-ray Units

By *Richard A. Weems, D.M.D., M.S. (DMORT IV)*

Several DMORT dentists recently met in San Antonio, Texas to evaluate three digital dental x-ray units used in human remains identification in a simulated DMORT setting. In digital x-ray systems a CCD or CMOS sensor which is connected to a laptop computer is placed in the mouth of the subject, exposed by x-rays and provides an "instant" radiographic image onto the computer display.

The foremost advantage of digital is the vast amount of time saved by totally eliminating film processing and the x-ray darkroom. Secondly, x-ray images in digital form are extremely easy to manipulate (eliminating some retakes), store, transmit, and export to interact with other computer software systems.

In this case, the software system was WINID.

WINID is the highly acclaimed dental identification matching software program written by Dr. Jim McGivney (DMORT VII) and has been used in numerous mass fatality incidents including the WTC. Once images are digitized and brought into WINID, they can be displayed and compared with great rapidity in making dental "matches".

In New York, postmortem dental films were exposed and chemically developed, but still needed to be



scanned into digital form for interaction with the matching program. Digital radiography directly inserts images into the program saving more time by eliminating postmortem scanning.

The evaluation activity took place at the Center for Education and Research in Forensics at the University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio School of Dentistry. The dentists attending were Dr. David Senn (host and center director), and Drs. Bryan Chrz, Jim McGivney, David Moretz, Melissa Moeckel, Richard Weems, and Doug Yauch. Digital systems by Dexis, Planmeca, and Schick were compared using fragmented and whole human remains to evaluate for ease of software use, sensor placement, image quality, and ability to interface with WINID.



DMORT NATIONAL NEWS

Disaster Mortuary Operational Response Team

February 2003



3

All three systems were found to perform extremely well but Dexis stood out as most effective overall given the conditions under which they were tested.

Work also continues by the group to complete the integration of the system with WINID and to develop written protocols for future training throughout DMORT. All results will be forwarded to OER for evaluation and further action.

Richard A. Weems, D.M.D., M.S.
Director of Dental Radiology
Director of Student and Alumni Affairs
School of Dentistry, room 124
University of Alabama at Birmingham
1919 7th. Ave. So.
Birmingham, AL 35294

NDMS Conference in Reno

The annual National Disaster Medical System conference is being held in Reno, Nevada this year from March 8th through 12th at the Reno Hilton.

The purpose of the 2003 National Disaster Medical System (NDMS) Conference is to promote interaction between local, State and Federal public health practitioners and policy makers. Expert faculty from a variety of local, State, and Federal agencies as well as from volunteer and academic entities will present on key topics such as counter-terrorism, weapons of mass destruction (WMD), clinical medicine, mental health, response teams, and international coordination.

For registration and program information on line go to <http://ndms.dhhs.gov/> and click on the NDMS Conference.



Region 4 and 6



Combined 2003 Training

Regions 4 and 6 will be holding their traditional combined training this year in Austin, Texas on July 25th through 27th. Registration and hotel information will be announced shortly.

Topics that are anticipated to be on the program include Homeland Security, the National Transportation Safety Board, Weapons of Mass Destruction, Odontology, Family Assistance, DNA and other timely and relevant topics.



REGION V AND VII TRAINING



October 4-6, 2002 St. Louis, Missouri

Regions V and VII held a combined training session at St. Louis University School of Medicine from October 4-6, 2002 and drew substantial attendance from team members and their spouses. The meeting began with an introduction and overview about DMORT by Dr. Frank Saul (Region V Commander) and Dean Snow (Region VII Commander) for new members and the spouses of team members.

Mary Fran Ernst, B.S., President of the American Academy of Forensic Sciences, Assistant Professor of

Pathology and Director of Medicolegal Education at St. Louis University School of Medicine, spoke on the death investigator's role as it applies to DMORT.

Dental team members attended a presentation by Dr. Jim McGivney (Region VII), who discussed proper WinID coding; recent advances in WinID as they apply to a mass disaster; the dental section of the DPMU (portable morgue); proper set up procedures for the dental unit; inventory and maintenance of dental supplies and equipment and ante-mortem and post-mortem team responsibilities. He detailed the need for team accountability for all dental records, including documentation, maintenance, organization, and duplication. He stressed the importance of working as a team, standardization of record documentation, and uniformity in methods and practices among all team members for continuity. He instructed the dental group to contact their Dental Team Leaders whenever there are discrepancies or questions, in order to insure consistency.

There was an exercise in documenting dental radiographs utilizing WinID. Dr. McGivney explained the need to record all unusual findings in the comments section of the database to record information that cannot be coded. The session concluded with a discussion, led by Dr. Allan Warnick (Region V), about general dental team concerns and questions.

The other team members attended a VIP class given by Bob Shank, Jr. (Deputy Commander Region V), Don Bloom (the author of VIP), Christie Whitaker (FAC), and Mike Gedert (Training Officer Region V). They validated the purpose of the VIP form, its use in completing the



DMORT NATIONAL NEWS

Disaster Mortuary Operational Response Team

February 2003



4

death certificate, and reviewed the revised VIP form in its entirety. They explained that details on the form need to be secured as completely as possible from the informant, who may not necessarily be the legal next of kin and that conflicting data from different informants require separate VIP forms. There was a reminder that ultimately, all of the paperwork belongs to the local Medical Examiner's Office.

A video produced by Mark Haskins about the DMORT V June 2001 training session in Detroit, Michigan was shown for the first time. This training included a mock terrorist bombing attack on the General Motors Global Headquarters located in one of the towers of the Renaissance Center.

A brief review of DMORT's role in the most recent deployments was followed by an invitation to team members to speak about their experiences at the World Trade Center (Brad Targhetta – Deputy Commander Region V, Julie Saul, Dr. Leslie Eisenberg, Dr. Don Simley, Dr. Allan Warnick, Dr. Gary Berman, Brent Hartley, Mark Justin), Pennsylvania (Dr. Joyce DeJong, Sue Atwood – Administrative Assistant Region V, Dr. Norm Sauer, Don Bloom, Mike Gedert), American Airlines Flight 537 crash in Queens, New York (Christie Whitaker) and the Georgia Crematory incident (Dennis McGowan, Dr. Mike Pratt).

Dr. Norman Hester, Director, Association of CUSEC State Geologists and Professor of Geology at Indiana University, gave a comprehensive presentation on the background and history of earthquakes along the New Madrid seismic zone. He pointed out the inevitability and likely extent of

another earthquake in the Midwest, and what to expect in the future. It's not a matter of "whether" it's a matter of "when".

Dennis McGowan (Region IV), medicolegal death investigator from Atlanta, Georgia summarized the Noble, Georgia crematory incident. He also presented Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) from the perspective of the DMORT teams. The term describes the intentional release of chemical, biological or nuclear agents to cause damage and panic. Today, WMD detection and awareness are of increased importance to all team members.

Dr. Joyce deJong (Region V) spoke on identification via DNA, and its application in mass fatalities, especially when severe fragmentation has occurred.

Christie Whitaker (Region IV) of the Family Assistance Team explained her experiences in the Dominican Republic, while gathering information for VIP, pertaining to American Airlines Flight 537, which crashed in Queens, NY. She illustrated the need to recognize and respect cultural differences in unfamiliar areas.

Mike Gedert reviewed DMORT On-Line Training. He strongly urged team members from ALL regions to begin registering and completing their sections on-line training examinations. This can be accomplished by accessing the website at www.DMORT.org.

Overall, the meeting was a deemed another success, due to those who organized the session, and to those who attended in significant numbers. Gratitude is owed to Dr. Jim McGivney, who was instrumental in securing the training location,

accommodations, transportation and refreshments for the weekend program.

AN INTRODUCTION TO DMORT ONLINE TRAINING

By Mike Gedert, Region V Training Officer

The online training program is a great opportunity for everyone to learn a little bit about the people who could be working around you during a deployment. The training is not overly intense, but is technical enough to give you a good feel for various different areas within DMORT. It is easy to listen to the lectures, read through the lecture notes, take a brief quiz, complete a survey, and earn CEU credits. But before you can do any of this, you have to be able to login to the program.

If you have never logged in to the Centre Learn online training program, you will need to remember a few things. First, your User Name will be the first letter of your formal first name and last name in CAPS, followed by the last four digits of your Social Security number with no spaces in between (ie. the User Name for William Smith - SS# 123-45-6789 would be WS6789). Second, your Password will be the same as your User Name, until you change it. Changing your password is suggested and is easy to do, after you have initially logged in and are filling in your profile information. NOTE: When you change your password, write it down and have it accessible, in case you forget it. Also remember that all login information is case sensitive. So if you change your password, remember if you use any capital letters in it.

If you have logged in before but



DMORT NATIONAL NEWS

Disaster Mortuary Operational Response Team

February 2003



5

cannot get back into the program, you need to be sure that you have used the correct case letters for your User Name and Password. If this is unsuccessful, try to remember if you changed your password. You may have to try some passwords that you have used for other things. If you still can't access the program, you can contact Mike Gedert at Mike@dmort.org, and I will try to troubleshoot your situation and assist with the login problem. I am the DMORT V Training Officer, but am currently the only DMORT Training Officer with training on the Centre Learn online training program. Until your region has a Training Officer who can assist with your online training experience, I will be glad to help anyone with problems.

Once you have logged in, there will be a menu on the left side of the screen with links to Welcome, Announcements, My Organization, etc. Click on Announcements. One of the first headings, under the list of announcements, will be Welcome - READ ME FIRST! Do what it says. In fact, it is best to print this sheet. Then, you can follow the directions on enrolling in your group and completing your profile. Completing BOTH of these steps is crucial, in order to earn your certificates for CEU's, upon completion of each module.

Navigating around the Centre Learn program will take a little getting used to, but can be accomplished with a little trial and error. As a precursor to listening to the lectures, check to see if your computer has Quicktime installed already. If not, or if you are not sure, attempt to open a lecture. If it does not play, there will be a link to Quicktime on the screen. Proceed to download and install Quicktime. You should not have any further problems with the lectures.

There are currently 7 DMORT and 28 DMAT modules included in the curricula for DMORT members. You must open all the sections in the Content area of each module and score an 80% or higher on the quiz, in order to earn your certificate. You may take the quiz as many times as necessary to pass.

The final thing that you should do is complete the survey. Upon completion of the survey, you will be able to print the CEU certificate for the module. You do not need to complete the survey and print your certificate, until you are in need of CEU's. There is no deadline for this.

When you are done with your online session be sure to click on the LOGOUT icon, located in the upper right corner of the screen. If you fail to do this, your session will continue. When this happens, the next time you attempt to login, you will receive a message stating you currently have an open session. You can check the box that says destroy that session and login again.

On a side note, online training is highly encouraged, but currently not required curriculum. However, it is possible that within the next few years, it will be a requirement for DMORT members. It is in your best interest to begin this training now, and get out of the gate early. You will be surprised how enjoyable it is to learn more about DMORT, DMAT and disaster response.

DMORT INTERNATIONAL

DMORT International is being developed. This will be a world wide rapid response team, responding with the International Medical Surgical

Teams (IMSurT). IMSurT already has a team in Boston and developing teams in Miami and Seattle. We are seeking certified latent finger print examiners and licensed embalmers. Two examiners and two embalmers will be assigned to work with each IMSurT team. The examiner or embalmer must already be a DMORT member in their region, not already on a speciality team and approved by their commander for these positions. Anyone interested please respond with a vitae to Arthur M. Bohanan, DI Team Leader at CBCPrints@yahoo.com

Help Us!!

The staff of your newsletter needs your help in developing articles of interest and relevance to the members of the DMORT Teams. The newsletter is now published quarterly in February, May, August and November. Please submit anything that you think may be appropriate by the first of the publication month for inclusion in that edition.

DMORT National News

Dennis E. McGowan, Editor

1700 South Crestview Drive

Snellville, GA 30078

770-985-8296

mcchief@bellsouth.net

Newsletter Committee

Sheila Hall

Kevin Costigan

Terry Swamson