



**FEMA**

# Backgrounder

## NATIONAL URBAN SEARCH AND RESCUE RESPONSE SYSTEM

The National Urban Search and Rescue (US&R) Response System is a framework for structuring local emergency services personnel into integrated disaster response task forces. These task forces, complete with the necessary tools and equipment, skills and techniques, can be deployed by the Department of Homeland Security for the rescue of victims of structural collapse.

There are 28 national US&R task forces located throughout the continental United States, trained and equipped to handle structural collapse. Any task force can be activated and deployed by FEMA to a disaster area and provide assistance in structural collapse rescue, or may be pre-positioned when a major disaster threatens a community. Each task force must have all its personnel and equipment at the embarkation point within six hours of activation. The task force can be dispatched and en route to its destination in a matter of hours.

Each task force is comprised of 70 specialists, and is divided into six major functional elements: search, rescue, medical, hazmat, logistics and planning. The task force is divided into two 35-member teams, which allows for the rotation and relief of personnel for round-the-clock search and rescue operations.

Task forces also have the flexibility to reconfigure and deploy as one 28-person (Type-III) team to respond to small, primarily weather-driven incidents where the requirements would be physical, technical and canine search, and rescue in light, wood-frame construction. Such events typically include hurricanes, tornados, ice storms and typhoons.

Some of the capabilities of the US&R task forces are:

- Physical search and rescue operations in damaged/collapsed structures;
- Operations in a known or suspected weapons-of-mass-destruction environment;
- Emergency medical care for entrapped victims, task force personnel and search canines;
- Reconnaissance to assess damage and needs, and provide feedback to other officials;
- Assessment/shut-off of utilities to houses and other buildings;
- Hazardous materials survey/evaluations;
- Structural and hazard evaluations of buildings;
- Stabilization of damaged structures, including shoring and cribbing operations; and
- A 62,000-pound equipment cache, configured to quickly deploy with the team.