

# FEDERAL FAMILY ASSISTANCE PLAN FOR AVIATION DISASTERS



PREPARED BY THE NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION  
SAFETY BOARD

April 12, 2000

SUBJECT: Federal Family Assistance Plan for Aviation Disasters

1. REFERENCES.

- a. Presidential Executive Memorandum, Subject: Assistance to Families Affected by Aviation and Other Transportation Disasters, September 9, 1996
- b. Public Law 104-264, Title VII, Aviation Disaster Family Assistance Act of 1996, October 9, 1996
- c. Memorandum of Understanding between Department of Defense and National Transportation Safety Board, April 3, 1997
- d. Memorandum of Understanding between Department of Health and Human Services and National Transportation Safety Board, June 19, 1997
- e. Memorandum of Understanding between Department of Justice and National Transportation Safety Board, January 28, 1997
- f. Memorandum of Understanding between Department of State and National Transportation Safety Board, June 18, 1997
- g. Memorandum of Understanding between Federal Emergency Management Agency and National Transportation Safety Board, October 24, 1998
- h. Statement of Understanding between American Red Cross and National Transportation Safety Board, September 28, 1998
- i. Memorandum of Understanding between Department of Transportation and National Transportation Safety Board, June 19, 1997
- j. Department of Transportation and National Transportation Safety Board, Final Report, Task Force on Assistance to Families of Aviation Disasters, October 29, 1997
- k. Public Law 105-148, Foreign Air Carrier Family Support Act, December 16, 1997

2. PURPOSE. This plan assigns responsibilities and describes the airline and Federal response to an aviation crash involving a significant number of passenger fatalities and/or injuries. It is the basic document for organizations which have been given responsibilities under this plan to develop supporting plans and establish procedures.

3. IMPLEMENTATION. This plan shall be executed in full or part by the Director, Office of Family Affairs (FA), at the direction of the Chairman, National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB).

- a. The Director shall recommend to the Chairman activation of the plan or portions thereof.
- b. Federal agencies that have responsibilities under this plan shall maintain control of their resources while supporting the NTSB in accordance with the above references. (For purposes of this document the terms “Federal agencies” and “Federal staff” includes the American Red Cross and the Salvation Army.)
- c. The NTSB, through its communications center, will initiate notification of Federal agencies to activate planning and coordinating with the airline an appropriate response based upon the magnitude of the aviation crash. As information about the incident becomes more concise, additional resources may be called to support the incident. Upon direction from the Director, the NTSB communications center will notify any or all of the following operations centers:

- (1) American Red Cross (ARC) (703) 206-8822
- (2) Department of State (DOS) (202) 647-1512
- (3) Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) (301) 443-1167 Ext. 0  
1-800- 872-6367
- (4) Federal Bureau of Investigation Operations Center (FBI) (202) 324-6700
- (5) Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) (202) 898-6100
- (6) Department of Defense (DOD) (703) 697-0218
- (7) Department of Justice (DOJ) (202) 514-5000
- (8) The Salvation Army (SA) (703) 519-5886

d. The role of the NTSB can generally be described as a coordinator to integrate the resources of the Federal Government and other organizations to support the efforts of the local and state government and the airline to meet the needs of aviation disaster victims and their families. The NTSB assists in coordinating Federal resources to local authorities and the airlines. Family counseling, victim identification and forensic services, communicating with foreign governments, and translation services are among the services with which the Federal government can help local authorities and the airlines deal with a major aviation disaster. It is recommended that the local government emergency services provide a representative to the Joint Family Support Operations Center (JFSOC) to participate in the local, airline, and Federal response. Details of the JFSOC are provided at Appendix B. It is recognized that the JFSOC layout is dependent on the facilities and rooms available at the time.

- e. Local authorities will maintain the same jurisdiction in regards to the initial accident response, recovery, security, site cleanup and medical examiner operations. The NTSB will lead the aviation crash investigation until it is determined to have been caused by a criminal act. The FBI will then become the lead investigative agency.
- f. The airline continues to have a fundamental responsibility to the victims and their families affected by an aviation crash. The airline is primarily responsible for family notification and all aspects of victim and family logistical support. Although their major responsibilities have not changed, the “Aviation Disaster Family Assistance Act of 1996” and the “Foreign Air Carrier Family Support Act” places the airline, as well as other support organizations, in a more collaborative relationship with families.
- g. All personnel involved in providing services to assist the victims and their family members should be trained in crisis response and must demonstrate compassion, sympathy, technical expertise, and professionalism. Information provided by family members and victims through discussions, interviews, counseling, and any other form of exchange of personal information must remain confidential and shall not be used for future litigation purposes.

#### 4. SCOPE.

- a. This plan pertains to any domestic or foreign commercial aviation crash that occurs within the United States, its territories, possessions and territorial seas.
- b. This plan is written with three possible crash scales supporting organizations should consider in their development of supporting plans and asset allocation calculations.
  - (1) Crash scale 1. This involves an aviation crash that involves 100 or fewer passengers and crew who are either fatalities or require medical assistance.
  - (2) Crash scale 2. This involves an aviation crash that involves 101 - 200 passengers and crew who are either fatalities or require medical assistance.
  - (3) Crash scale 3. This involves an aviation crash that involves 201 or more passengers and crew who are either fatalities or require medical assistance.

#### 5. ASSUMPTIONS.

- a. The Chairman of the NTSB will request Federal agencies to support the NTSB in accordance with the above references.
- b. The local medical examiner/coroner having jurisdiction will allow the Federal government to provide assistance. (It is noted that there are differences between a medical examiner and coroner. For purposes of this document the term “medical examiner” is used interchangeably with “coroner”.)
- c. There will be fatalities and seriously injured passengers and crew for each of the above three scenarios.

- d. Large numbers of families of fatalities will travel to the city closest to the incident and will utilize the accommodations provided by the airline. The remainder of families of fatalities will remain at their local residence.
  - e. Most, if not all, families of seriously injured personnel will travel to the location where the injured are hospitalized, and once the injured are released from the hospital, will return home.
6. GENERAL. The family assistance mission tasks that follow an aviation crash are:
- a. Make initial notification to family members of victims involved in the aviation crash based on manifest documents and other available information.
  - b. Monitor search and recovery operations conducted by the local jurisdiction and offer assistance where needed.
  - c. Determine the status and location of victims.
  - d. Obtain approval of the local medical examiner to provide Federal assistance.
  - e. Assist the local medical examiner in the identification of fatalities and the notification of their families.
  - f. Provide psychological and logistical support and services to victims and their family members.
  - g. Provide daily briefings to families on the progress of recovery efforts, identification of victims, the investigation, and other areas of concern.
  - h. Arrange for a memorial service for the fatalities and their family members.
  - i. Provide for the return of personal effects.
  - j. Maintain contact with victims and their families to provide updates on the progress of the investigation and other related matters.
7. RESPONSIBILITIES. There are seven Victim Support Tasks (VSTs). VSTs are tasks which participating organizations may be required to perform based upon the size and circumstances of the actual incident. The seven VSTs are NTSB Tasks; Airline Tasks; Family Care and Mental Health (ARC); Victim Identification, Forensic and Medical Services (DHHS); Assisting Families of Foreign Victims (DOS); Communications (FEMA); and Assisting Victims of Crime (DOJ). Each aviation crash is unique, and all of the following responsibilities may or may not be employed. Agencies and organizations should consider this and the three crash level scales when developing their supporting plans.

a. NTSB: VST 1, “NTSB Tasks”.

- (1) Coordinate Federal assistance and serve as liaison between airline and family members.
- (2) Provide NTSB toll free number to family members to obtain information on the recovery and identification effort, accident investigation, and other concerns. This number will normally be provided to families on site during the initial family briefing and repeated in subsequent briefings. The NTSB will coordinate with the airline to have airline family representatives provide the toll free number to the families that do not travel to the site.
- (3) Request a copy of the passenger manifest from the airline.
- (4) Coordinate with Department of Transportation for marine search and rescue.
- (5) Review with the airline family support logistics with special consideration toward security, quality of rooms and facilities, and privacy for family members.
- (6) Integrate local and Federal government officials and airline staff to form a Joint Family Support Operations Center to facilitate close coordination of services and activities.
- (7) Coordinate assistance effort with local and state authorities, to include the medical examiner, local law enforcement, emergency management, hospitals, and other emergency support personnel.
- (8) Maintain communications with the involved airline to receive frequent updates on the status of notification of victims’ families.
- (9) Conduct daily coordination meetings with the airline and local and Federal government representatives to review daily activities, resolve problem areas, and to synchronize future family support operations and activities. An example of information that may be needed at the daily coordination meeting is at Appendix B.
- (10) Provide and coordinate family briefings to those at the site and those who decide not to be at the site.
- (11) Discuss with the medical examiner the subject of DNA testing: i.e., under what conditions would it be used; to what extent would it be used; whom the medical examiner would use to collect and test samples; and whom would pay for testing of samples.
- (12) Coordinate with investigator in charge for a possible visit to the crash site for family members.

- (13) Provide information releases to the media pertaining to the types of support that have been brought in to assist family members.
- (14) Maintain contact with family members to keep them informed about the progress of the investigation and continue to meet their future needs.
  - a) Approximately 2 to 4 months after the date of the crash, factual reports written by the NTSB investigators are made available in a public docket. Families should be informed approximately 4 weeks prior to the factual report being made public that they may request the NTSB provide a copy of the report. The report will be provided to them at no cost.
  - b) Families will also be notified of a public hearing concerning the crash if the NTSB decides a public hearing is necessary. The hearing is designed to gather additional facts from individuals selected to testify. Travel and lodging for the hearing is at the family's expense. Families will be provided seating and copies of official exhibits discussed at the hearing.
  - c) Families will be invited to attend, at their own expense, the board meeting at NTSB's Washington, DC, headquarters. The NTSB investigative staff presents to the full five Member Board a draft accident report for member discussion and approval at this board meeting. This report documents the NTSB's determination of the probable cause of the crash and recommendations on ways to prevent future aviation crashes.
- (15) Consolidate and review after action reports to resolve problem areas and update operating plans and procedures.

b. Airline: VST 2, "Airline Tasks".

- (1) In addition to accident notification required by 49 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 830.5, notify the NTSB communications center at (202) 314-6290 immediately upon knowledge of a crash.
  - a) Provide place of incident (or general vicinity of incident), number of passengers and crew based on preliminary departure information and number of injured and fatalities (if known).
  - b) Provide flight number, origination, connection points and final destination (if known), and whether the flight was domestic or international.
  - c) Provide name and telephone number of the person who is in overall charge of the incident site.
  - d) Provide name, telephone number and location of the hotel that has been designated as the JFSOC.

- e) Provide name and telephone number of the person responsible for the passenger manifest.
  - f) Provide name and telephone number of the person responsible for family notification.
- (2) Provide the public a reliable publicized toll free number with sufficient telephone capacity.
- a) When disseminating the toll-free number, the carrier should ask the media to inform the public that this number should only be used by individuals who have a reason to believe a family member or friend was a passenger on the flight.
  - b) The media notice should emphasize that initial calls to the airline are to provide a point of contact with the airline, provide basic flight information to the caller, and gather information so the airline may obtain points of contact for each passenger.
  - c) The media should be asked to reemphasize the carrier involved, the flight number, airport of origination, connection and final destination. This may reduce the number of callers who know someone who was on another carrier's flight traveling to a different destination.
  - d) The "message" heard by callers on hold should urge anyone who does not have reason to believe that a family member or friend was a passenger or is unable to provide relevant information on the passenger to please clear the line. The "message" also should restate the carrier involved, the flight number, airport of origination, connection and final destination.
- (3) Provide timely notification to family members of passengers which may consist of a continuous process of updates based upon manifest reconciliation with boarding documents (ticket lifts, ticket readers, final gate check-in name list). It is recommended that passenger information be provided to family members as it becomes known. Do not wait until all names on the check-in manifest are confirmed before notifying individual family members. For example, the family should be provided information as to whether the passenger is shown checked in or not, but that the passenger's status cannot be confirmed until the check in manifest is reconciled with the boarding documents collected at the gate. Once contact is established with family members, it must be maintained, regardless if additional information becomes available. Personnel should be trained in crisis response and techniques to notify a person that a family member may have been involved in a disaster.
- (4) Provide the NTSB, upon request, the most current reconciled copy of the passenger manifest. Each copy should be numbered or annotated so it can be distinguished from previous copies.



- (5) Secure facilities at departure, arrival, and connecting airports where family members may be initially gathered to protect them from media and solicitors, as well as to receive continuous updates on the reconciliation of the passenger manifest and other information on the crash. If at a secured facility, family members will be notified personally and privately by personnel trained in crisis response and death notification that their loved one was on the plane.
- (6) Provide logistical support to family members who desire to travel to the incident site (or to a hospital location), which includes, but is not limited to, transportation, lodging, meals, security, communications, and incidentals. Factors to consider in selecting a facility are quality of rooms and size of facilities, privacy for family members, and relative location to medical examiner's office, temporary morgue, airport operations, crash site, NTSB investigation Headquarters, and medical treatment facilities.
- (7) Inform family members (or family friends or clergy who are with the family) at an appropriate time, but as early as possible after being notified, that it is critical that they contact their family dentist to obtain the dental records and dental x-rays of their loved one. Ask the family to have the records and x-rays overnight expressed to the address of the hotel where the JFSOC will be located. Packages should be addressed to the Deputy Director, FA, NTSB. If the family is coming to the site within the next 48 hours, the family may arrange to hand carry these documents. It should be explained that dental records and x-rays are critical in the victim identification process. If the family is already at the site or arrives without making arrangements with their dentist, Disaster Mortuary Operational Response Team (DMORT) personnel will coordinate with the family's dentist to obtain dental records and x-rays.
- (8) Make provisions for a JFSOC to include space, communication and logistical support for the assisting local and Federal staff. Details of the JFSOC are provided at Appendix B.
- (9) Make provisions for private areas within the hotel for DMORT and medical examiner personnel to collect ante mortem information from families at the site. Also provide quiet space and communications for DMORT and medical examiner personnel to telephonically collect ante mortem information from families who decide to stay away from the site. Plan to provide the following rooms for crisis counseling/DMORT use:
  - a) Crash scale 1: 6 rooms
  - b) Crash scale 2: 12 rooms
  - c) Crash scale 3: 15 rooms

Support requirements for planning purposes are at Appendix B. These facilities will also be used to inform families when positive identification has been made by the medical examiner. By having the DMORT/medical examiner team

representative located within the family assistance center, transportation of victim's remains and other logistical considerations can be better coordinated without having an airline reservation specialist at the morgue location.

- (10) Provide DOS representative necessary information on foreign passengers to facilitate interaction with appropriate foreign government embassies.
- (11) Provide notification to family members prior to releasing passenger names to the public. Family members should be given appropriate time to notify other family members and friends prior to public release of the victim's name. While it may be necessary for some families to have more than one contact point with the airline, families may be requested to designate one primary contact point for purposes of information sharing among the family. This will allow the airline to use their personnel in a more efficient manner. The carrier is under no obligation to release the victim's name if family members do not wish the victim's name to be released.
- (12) Inquire at the time of notification or soon after if family members desire, ARC crisis assistance or an ARC person just to talk to. If they are undecided or say no, ask them to inform their airline representative if they reconsider. Pass all requests for assistance to the ARC representative who will coordinate for an ARC staff member in the family member's local area to contact the family.
- (13) Provide the media with continuous updates on the progress of the notification process, such as providing the number of victims' families notified as of a certain time and the number remaining to be notified. This process will continue until all victims' families have been notified.
- (14) Assist family members as they travel to and from the site by informing flight crews and airport personnel that family members are on particular flights. At departure, connecting, and arrival airports, family members should have airline personnel meet and assist them while on airport grounds. If necessary, seek assistance from other carriers who may have a larger presence at the airport. Assist family members as they depart the incident site and provide a contact person who will continue to be the airline interface with the family after the family returns to their residence.
- (15) Provide a contact person to meet family members as they arrive and accompany them at the incident site. This person will be responsible for assisting the family while at the site and should continue to be the airline interface with the family until the family returns to their residence. At that time the airline may decide to designate a single contact person for all family members.
- (16) Maintain daily contact with family members who do not travel to the incident site by providing a contact person from the airline.
- (17) Establish a badging system to identify family members.
- (18) Establish a joint liaison with ARC at each supporting medical treatment facility to track the status of injured victims and to provide assistance to their families.

- (19) Develop procedures for the handling of personal effects not being held as evidence for purposes of a criminal or accident investigation. Utilizing a third party who has experience in the return of personal effects associated with aviation disasters should be considered. Done properly it is time consuming and resource intensive. Consideration should also be given to protecting airline employees from re-experiencing the crash, which could result in future psychological and physical health problems. Provisions will be made for unclaimed possessions to be retained for at least 18 months from the date of the crash as required by law.
- (20) Designate an individual who will be the airline's representative to the Deputy Director of FA. This individual will travel to various locations, such as accident site, morgue, JFSOC, and family assistance center with the Deputy Director of FA. The designated individual should have the authority or ready access to those who have sufficient authority to make decisions on behalf of the airline.
- (21) Consult with family members about any airline-sponsored monument, including any inscriptions.
- (22) Provide reasonable reimbursement to the ARC for the services provided to the family, airline, and supporting personnel.
- (23) Coordinate with DOJ in arranging meetings with family members to explain their rights under the victims of crime legislation, if the crash is declared a crime.
- (24) Provide the same support and treatment of families of non-revenue passengers (and any other victim of the accident) as for revenue passengers.
- (25) Participate in daily coordination meetings to review daily activities, resolve problem areas, and to synchronize future family support operations and activities. Information that may be needed at the daily coordination meeting is at Appendix B. This information is helpful to plan logistical requirements, such as food, lodging, and transportation, as well as providing everyone with an update of current and future support operations.

c. ARC: VST 3, "Family Care and Mental Health".

- (1) Provide a representative to the JFSOC to coordinate with other members of the operations center staff ARC related issues and family requests for assistance. Additional personnel may be needed for crash scale 2 or 3 scenarios.
- (2) Coordinate and manage the numerous organizations and personnel that will offer counseling, religious and other support services to the operation. A staff processing center, away from the Family Assistance Center, should be set up to screen, monitor and manage personnel (paid and volunteer) so that families are not outnumbered and overwhelmed by well-intentioned organizations and individuals. The staff processing center will also be responsible for the badging of personnel, matching volunteer skills with organizational needs, assigning work schedules,

briefing and debriefing of support staff, personnel and planning for future activities.

- a) Qualified local resources should be integrated with ARC personnel to provide crisis and grief counseling, food services, administrative assistance, and other support services to family members and support organizations.
  - b) Crisis and grief counseling should be coordinated with the airline to contact and set up an appointment, if appropriate, with family members who do not travel to the site.
- (3) Employ an accounting system to accurately record cost data in specific cost categories for later reimbursement.
  - (4) Activate local, state and national ARC personnel to provide crisis and grief counseling to family members and support personnel. This includes coordinating with the airline to contact and set up an appointment, if appropriate, with family members who do not travel to the site.
  - (5) Assess the needs and available resources of other agencies and coordinate with them to ensure ongoing emotional support for workers during the operation and provide debriefings before departure.
  - (6) Establish a joint liaison with the airline at each supporting medical treatment facility to track the status of injured victims and to provide assistance to their families.
  - (7) Coordinate with the airline to establish areas for families to grieve privately.
  - (8) Coordinate on site child care services for families who bring young children.
  - (9) Arrange a suitable inter-faith memorial service days following the crash and a memorial service for any future burial of unidentified remains.
  - (10) Provide families, at their request with referrals to mental health professionals and support groups that are in the family member's local area.
- d. DHHS: VST 4, "Victim Identification, Forensic and Medical Services".
- (1) Provide a representative to the JFSOC to coordinate with other members of the operations center staff DHHS related issues and family requests for assistance. Additional personnel may be needed for crash scale 2 or 3 scenarios.
  - (2) Provide necessary DMORT team members to assist the medical examiner in victim identification and mortuary services. Configuration of team and skills required will be determined by details of the crash, medical examiner's request for assistance, and crash scale 1, 2, or 3 factors.

- (3) Provide, if appropriate, a portable morgue facility and the necessary equipment and supplies to augment the local medical examiner's capabilities.
  - (4) Monitor the status of incoming dental records and x-rays to insure that all records have been received. If not, take steps to obtain the records and x-rays. Request assistance from DOS for acquiring necessary records for foreign passengers and crew.
  - (5) Develop a standard ante mortem questionnaire and disposition of remains form that can be adapted to meet local medical examiner and state requirements. The disposition of remains form will be used to obtain directions from the lawfully authorized next of kin on what he/she desires the medical examiner to do with remains that may later be identified as those of their family member. Information collected from family members is strictly confidential and will be used only for medical examiner purposes.
  - (6) Interview family members who are both on site and off site for ante mortem identification information and disposition of remains information.
  - (7) Coordinate with the medical examiner to integrate non-DMORT personnel who are providing assistance to the medical examiner's office into the morgue operation.
  - (8) Assist the medical examiner in notifying family members of positive identification and include an explanation of how identification was determined. Notification team may include, if appropriate, ARC crisis counselor, clergy, and airline family escort.
  - (9) Check remains prior to release to local funeral director. Insure that all documentation is correct and a chain of custody is established.
  - (10) Provide the NTSB with names of victims and their next of kin (NOK), relationship to victim, and addresses and telephone numbers of NOK. A source for this information is the ante mortem questionnaire.
  - (11) Assist the airlines, if requested, with finding next of kin to be notified by use of established cooperative relationships with local, state, and Federal law enforcement agencies.
  - (12) Provide, if requested, professional medical staff and technicians to assist in the care and recovery of injured victims.
  - (13) Assist the ARC, if requested, with additional trained and experienced crisis counselors.
- e. DOD: Supports DHHS in VST 4, "Victim Identification, Forensic and Medical Services". If required:

- (1) Provide the use of a military installation, such as Dover Air Force Base, for mortuary support operations.
  - (2) Provide personnel from the Armed Forces Institute Pathology (AFIP), Office of the Armed Forces Medical Examiner (OAFME), to assist in the identification effort and to conduct appropriate DNA comparison testing on specimens submitted by the medical examiner.
  - (3) Provide assets from the US Navy's Support Salvage (SUPSALV) for the purposes of offshore search, salvage, and recovery of non-military aircraft wreckage, when these services are not locally available. SUPSALV is delegated the responsibility for technical, and when tasked, operational control of aircraft search, identification, and/or underwater recovery operations. NTSB and SUPSALV will jointly determine if assets should be deployed and SUPSALV will advise the NTSB on alternate search and recovery methods that may be employed.
  - (4) Provide within 24 hours a trained Graves Registration and Recovery Team to assist in the recovery efforts at the crash site.
  - (5) Provide within 72 hours available dental records and x-rays of military fatalities that are active duty, retired, veteran, or reserve.
  - (6) Provide pouches and transfer cases for human remains.
- f. DOS: VST 5, "Assisting Families of Foreign Victims". If required:
- (1) Provide a representative to the JFSOC to coordinate with other members of the operations center staff DOS related issues, such as obtaining dental records and dental x-rays from foreign families and responding to family requests for assistance. Additional personnel may be needed for crash scale scenarios involving international flights.
  - (2) Provide official notification to foreign governments that have citizens involved in the aviation incident after obtaining necessary information on foreign passengers from the airline.
  - (3) Assist the airline in notifying US citizens who may reside or are traveling outside the United States that a member of their family has been involved in an aviation accident.
  - (4) Provide translation services to facilitate communications with the victim's family and all interested parties.
  - (5) Assist the airline, the Federal support staff, and others in maintaining daily contact with foreign families who do not travel to the United States.
  - (6) Assist foreign air carrier's employees and families of foreign victims with entry into the United States and extend or grant visas.

- (7) Facilitate necessary consulate and customs services for the return of remains and personal effects into the country of destination.
  - (8) Assist in the effort to provide the medical examiner the necessary information on foreign victims to complete death certificates.
- g. FEMA: VST 6, “Communications”. If required:
- (1) Provide a representative to the JFSOC to coordinate with other members of the operations center staff and local and state officials emergency management related issues. Additional personnel may be needed for crash scale scenarios involving a major city emergency response.
  - (2) Provide personnel, upon request of the NTSB, to assist in public information dissemination, to include assistance in establishing and staffing external media support centers at the crash site, wreckage hanger, family support operations center, airport, and other areas that may attract media interest.
  - (3) Provide voice and data communication assets to communicate from the incident site to the NTSB Communications Center.
- h. DOJ: VST 7, “Assisting Victims of Crime”. If required:
- (1) Provide, upon NTSB request, a FBI Disaster Squad with sufficient personnel to obtain fingerprint identification of aviation crash fatalities. This team will work with the medical examiner and the DMORT personnel at the morgue location.
  - (2) The following responsibilities will only be implemented if the airline disaster is officially declared a criminal act:
    - a) Provide a representative to the JFSOC to coordinate with other members of the operations center on DOJ-related issues.
    - b) Provide information to victims and their family members, on site and off site, as required under the Victims of Crime Act of 1984, the Victim and Witness Protection Act of 1982 as amended, other relevant statutes, and the 1995 Attorney General Guidelines for Victim and Witness Assistance.
    - c) Assist the ARC, if requested, with additional trained and experienced crisis counselors through the Office for Victims of Crimes Community Crisis Response Program.
    - d) Provide updates to victims and their family members on the progress of the criminal investigation.

## 8. COORDINATING INSTRUCTIONS.

- a. The point of contact for this plan is the Deputy Director, FA, NTSB. The telephone number is (202) 314-6185. The office fax number is (202) 314-6638.
- b. Upon implementation and until the NTSB's family affairs staff is situated at the JFSOC, calls should be directed to the NTSB Communications Center at (202) 314-6290 (voice) or (202) 314- 6293 (fax). The Communications Center will pass any information or messages to the appropriate NTSB family affairs staff member.
- c. It is recommended that supporting agencies make the same individual or individuals available to each aviation crash as their representative to the JFSOC. Major aviation incidents do not occur frequently. When they do occur, however, people and organizations in the past have had very little or no experience dealing with the many sensitive issues of an aviation disaster. By developing a core group of experienced staff, operational procedures will continually improve and individual and group experiential bases will increase, all culminating in the better delivery of support services to victims and their families. Agencies are not precluded from designating and training alternate personnel.
- d. It is recommended that Federal personnel involved at the incident site wear clothing articles, such as hats, shirts, and/or jackets that identify the agency or group with which they are associated. This will be helpful for families, as well as for all those involved in supporting the operation.
- e. Agencies that participate in supporting victims and their family members under this plan are requested to submit an after action report to the Deputy Director, FA, within 30 days of completion of their tasks. This information must be captured so appropriate lessons can be derived, corrective actions taken, and plans changed accordingly. A sample format is at Appendix C.
- f. Other than the media releases by the airline on the progress of family notification and release of passenger names described in paragraph 7b, all media inquiries and releases that pertain to the family affairs operation will be referred to the NTSB family affairs officer. The NTSB will advise and assist the local medical examiner on any media affairs in his or her area of responsibility. Support organizations may provide press releases or briefings on their specific agency mission/action during this event. There are no restrictions on victims or family members meeting with the media if they so desire.
- g. Due to differences in individual airline and airline underwriter policies, as well as the aviation crash itself, reimbursement of costs associated with participation in an aviation disaster will be made after discussions with the airline and their insurance underwriter.



## ENCLOSURES

Appendix A      Drafted Media Release and Background Papers

Appendix B      Joint Family Support Operations Center

Appendix C      Suggested After Action Report Format

Appendix D      Questions and Answers

## APPENDIX A

### DRAFT MEDIA RELEASES AND BACKGROUND PAPERS

#### **Media Topic**

Federal Agencies Supporting the Victims of (Accident)

National Disaster Mortuary Operational Response Team (DMORT)

Victim Identification Process

Aviation Disaster Family Assistance Act of 1996 (Background Paper)

Return of Personal Effects (Background Paper)

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

FEDERAL AGENCIES SUPPORTING THE VICTIMS OF (ACCIDENT)

**(LOCATION)**— The Aviation Disaster Family Assistance Act of 1996 (PL 104-264, Title VII), was passed by the Congress and signed by President Clinton on October 9, 1996. This Act gave the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) the additional responsibility of aiding the families of victims of aircraft accidents occurring in U.S. territory. An earlier Presidential Executive Memorandum, dated September 9, 1996, complements the new law, in which President Clinton designated the NTSB as the coordinator of Federal services for families of major transportation disasters.

The NTSB, in a cooperative effort with local, state and (AIRLINE) authorities, is coordinating Federal support to assist (CITY) in meeting the needs of the victims' families of (ACCIDENT). Federal and other agencies that are involved in the family support area are: **(American Red Cross (ARC); Department of State (DOS); Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS); Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA); Department of Justice (DOJ); and Department of Defense (DOD).**

The ARC is providing crisis and grief counseling not only to the families that are here in (CITY), but also for those families who have decided to remain home. The ARC has activated local, state, and national ARC personnel to augment local resources to support the families affected by this tragic disaster. ARC personnel and local volunteers are also at key locations, such as the airport, family assistance center and the morgue, assisting all the support workers who have contributed so much to this operation.

The Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) is primarily responsible for assisting the (CITY) medical examiner in the identification and return of deceased victims to their families.

The National Disaster Mortuary Operational Response Team (DMORT) is currently assisting the city medical examiner. The team is composed of forensic pathologists, odontologists, anthropologists, finger print experts, and other technical personnel. DHHS is also providing a fully equipped mobile mortuary to expand the medical examiner's capabilities.

**(Since there are foreign passengers involved in this accident, The Department of State (DOS) is assisting the airline in officially notifying the victim's government and helping those affected foreign families travel to the US. They are also providing translation services to facilitate communication with all interested parties.)**

**(The NTSB has also called on the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to augment NTSB public information efforts with additional staff. This will enable the NTSB to staff additional media support locations, such as XXXXX)**

**(Now that this tragedy has been officially declared a criminal act by (LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCY), the Department of Justice (DOJ) is providing information to family members on the services and assistance provided under the Victims of Crime Act of 1984. Such services and assistance may include compensation for loss of support, loss of wages, medical and mental health counseling expenses, and funeral costs. DOJ is also responsible for keeping the family members up to date on the progress of the criminal investigation.)**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

DISASTER MORTUARY OPERATIONAL RESPONSE TEAM (DMORT)

**(LOCATION)**—Immediately upon being notified of the **(ACCIDENT)**, the National Transportation Safety Board contacted the local **medical examiner (NAME)** to jointly assess the situation to determine if the Federal government can assist in the recovery and identification of fatalities of **(ACCIDENT)**.

**(ME's name)** requested Federal assistance and the NTSB requested the Office of Emergency Preparedness, United States Public Health Service (USPHS) to activate the Disaster Mortuary Operational Response Team (DMORT). Approximately **(time and date)** the first elements of DMORT arrived on site.

The DMORT members are composed of private citizens each with a particular field of expertise. Their licensure and certification is recognized by all states and they are compensated for their duty time by the Federal government. They will assist the medical examiner with recovery, identification and body preparation of the deceased victims. The team consists of forensic pathologists, medical examiners, odontologists, anthropologists, funeral directors, finger print experts, and other skilled technicians. Many have experience with other aviation disasters, as well as experience involving natural disasters.

The NTSB also requested the delivery of an emergency mobile mortuary. The facility, which is maintained in Rockville, Maryland, contains a complete morgue with the necessary prepackaged equipment and supplies to support each workstation. It **(arrived...time/date) (is expected to arrive approximately time/date)**. It **(has been/will be)** located in the vicinity of **(location)** and **(is/will be)** considered a secure site.

This has been a cooperative effort between local, state, and Federal officials, as well as **(airline)** with the shared goal of recovering, identifying and returning all victims of this disaster to their loved ones as quickly as possible.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

## VICTIM IDENTIFICATION PROCESS

**(LOCATION)**—**(NAME)**, the local medical examiner is leading the effort to identify the victims of **(ACCIDENT)**. As the medical examiner, **(NAME)** is legally responsible and retains jurisdiction on victim identification and cause of death determination.

The Aviation Disaster Family Assistance Act of 1996 designates the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) to coordinate Federal assistance in response to aviation accidents, such as the **(ACCIDENT)**. The NTSB, at the request of **(NAME)**, has provided the medical examiner's office the services of the Disaster Mortuary Operational Response Team (DMORT). The team consists of forensic pathologists, medical examiners, odontologists, anthropologists, funeral directors, finger print experts, and other skilled technicians. Many have experience with other aviation disasters, as well as experience involving natural disasters. The NTSB also requested the delivery of an emergency mobile mortuary, which is maintained in Maryland. It contains a complete morgue with the necessary prepackaged equipment and supplies to expand the operational capacity of the medical examiner's office.

The identification process is very deliberate and time consuming. Consequently, family members and the media are cautioned not to expect immediate identifications to be made. In some cases, unfortunately not all victims may be identified. To minimize this possibility, the NTSB has called on this team of experienced experts.

The identification process utilizes a number of media to make a positive identification. The process may start with documents found on the victim, as well as descriptions of clothing, jewelry, and other characteristics described by family members. Family members have been requested to provide dental records and x-rays that will assist the forensic odontologists with their work. The fingerprint experts of the FBI Disaster Squad will also make fingerprint comparisons. Forensic pathologists and anthropologists can also assist by providing information on general age, sex, size, color of hair and eyes, and race of the victim. Based upon past medical information collected from family members, they may be able to determine a victim by a previous broken arm that was reported by the family and the comparison of a x-ray taken by the medical examiner. Collectively, all these procedures' findings must support one another prior to a positive identification being determined by the medical examiner.

Once **(NAME)** makes a positive identification, the medical examiner's office will personally notify the victim's family. Health care and other support professionals will be available to assist family members through this experience.

## FOR BACKGROUND INFORMATION

### AVIATION DISASTER FAMILY ASSISTANCE ACT OF 1996 (PL 104-264, Title VII)

The National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) has been investigating the nation's aviation accidents for nearly thirty years and has been to the scene of nearly 100,000 general and commercial airplane accidents. The Aviation Disaster Family Assistance Act of 1996 (PL 104-264, Title VII), was passed by Congress and signed by President Clinton on October 9, 1996. The Act gave the NTSB the additional responsibility of aiding the families of victims of aircraft accidents. The new law is complemented by an earlier Presidential Executive Memorandum dated September 9, 1996, in which President Clinton designated the NTSB as the coordinator of Federal services for families of major transportation disasters in the U.S. This authority enables the NTSB to harness the collective resources of the Federal government and direct aid to any area in which it is needed.

Before President Clinton's Presidential Memorandum, the families of people killed or injured in a commercial aircraft accident had been primarily assisted in the aftermath of the accident by the involved airline. Often local and state agencies, including volunteer organizations also responded, but often times the effort was uncoordinated and divisive. While the airline remains a major participant, the NTSB is now able to apply Federal resources to augment local and state efforts and coordinate the overall family assistance support system.

The following are highlights of the Aviation Disaster Family Assistance Act of 1996:

1. The Chairman of the NTSB designates and publicizes the name and telephone number of the Director of the Office of Family Affairs who will be the liaison between family members and the airline.
2. The Chairman of the NTSB designates a nonprofit organization (American Red Cross) whose primary responsibility will be to coordinate the emotional care and support to victims and their families.
3. Upon request, the airline will provide a copy of the latest available passenger manifest to the Director of the Office of Family Affairs.
4. No person (including a State or political subdivision) will impede the ability of the NTSB and/or the Director of the Office of Family Affairs to carry out its responsibilities or the ability of the families of passengers involved in the accident to have contact with one another.
5. Provides a 30-day waiting period in which unsolicited communications by attorneys, representatives of an attorney, insurance company, or airline litigation representative to victims or their families are prohibited.

## FOR BACKGROUND INFORMATION

### RETURN OF PERSONAL EFFECTS

At the time victims of an accident are removed from the incident site, their personal effects are also being recovered. All recovered items are stored in a secure area. There are two types of personal effects, associated and unassociated.

Associated personal effects are those personal items that can be identified to a specific individual. Examples are items such as rings or earrings that are found on the victim or articles such as a wallet found in a carry on bag with driver's license, credit cards, and other items with a specific person's name.

Unassociated personal effects are those items that can not be identified to a specific person. Examples may be a necklace or earrings found near, but not on, a victim or clothing that has spilled out of a suitcase.

Sometimes authorities retain personal effects if needed as evidence or as part of the investigation. Once the authorities no longer need retained items, the items are returned to the airline to be returned to the appropriate owner.

The airline or their representative returns associated items by contacting the survivor or victim's family and asking them how they would like the recovered items returned. The airline or its representative then carries out the desires of the survivor or the victim's family.

The process for the return of unassociated personal effects is deliberate and time consuming. The primary problem is determining ownership of items that may number in the thousands. Normally, all items are first inventoried, numbered, and photographed. Once completed, a photo catalogue is produced and provided to all families who request a copy. Instructions are provided for claiming an item. Once all families have responded, items that are claimed by only one family are returned according to their instructions. Claims by more than one party must be substantiated and proven by pictures, invoices, or other means. The item in question is returned once ownership is determined.



## APPENDIX B

### Joint Family Support Operations Center

The Joint Family Support Operations Center (JFSOC) is an important element in the control and coordination of the responses and resources of supporting organizations involved in an aviation accident.

Although the JFSOC concept is not new, historically there has been no element such as the JFSOC that has been utilized at an aviation accident that specifically focused on coordinating support to families affected by an aviation disaster.

The JFSOC comes from the well-utilized and regarded concept of the Emergency Operations Center (EOC). It is a central location where participating organizations can be brought together to monitor, plan, coordinate, and execute a response operation maximizing the utilization of all available resources. Communication or sharing of information has always been and will always be the major obstacle to a successful emergency response. The JFSOC is designed to address this common problem.

Organizations that will normally be involved in the JFSOC are the NTSB, airline, ARC, Salvation Army, local government and law enforcement. Depending on the extent of the disaster, other organizations may also be involved in the JFSOC. They may be the Department of State (DOS), Department of Justice (DOJ), Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), Department of Defense (DOD), and foreign consulates.

The responsibilities of the JFSOC are as follows:

1. Serves as the central focal point for coordination and sharing of information among participating organizations.
2. Monitors ongoing family support activities and tracks mission activities of each organization, such as the status of the resources available, whether is has been assigned or is out of service.
3. Maintains current list of locations and key telephone numbers of involved organizations and personnel.
4. Provides responses to calls and requests or provides an appropriate hand off with the primary organization responsible for the issue.
5. Maintains a daily journal of organizational activities and responses.
6. Maintains a record of coverage of family affairs activities by the media.

The staff of the JFSOC is responsible for the following tasks:

1. Maintains current status of family support activities.
2. Prepares input for the NTSB family web site.
3. Provides input for the daily family briefing.
4. Agencies represented in the JFSOC will be briefed on activities concerning family support via daily briefings.
5. Coordinates and shares information among all organizational representatives.
6. Maintains locations and telephone numbers of organizational entities along with key personnel (family assistance center, medical examiner, staff processing center, NTSB investigation HQs, airline, crash site, supporting organizations, local law enforcement, local government, and etc).
7. Responds to requests with an appropriate reply or by directing requests to the appropriate organization with primary responsibility.
8. Monitors and collects media reports on the family support area.
9. Maintains and updates daily plan and future operations.
10. Maintains status and location of injured victims.
11. Maintains status of identification effort utilizing information provided by ME/coroner.
12. Updates information on numbers of families at site and projected departures/arrivals (24/48 hours).
13. Tracks status of ante mortem interviews.

An aviation accident may take place anywhere, from an isolated area to a major metropolitan area. Due to the need to provide flexible planning guidance, the location of the JFSOC will be determined on a basis of available space, such as hotels, local government buildings, mobile command posts, and also the location and severity of the aviation disaster.

The involved air carrier should plan on securing a hotel area that can accommodate the people, equipment, and activities that will be involved in the JFSOC. Although hotel space for family members and the Family Assistance Center (FAC) will be at a premium, the JFSOC should be located in a same hotel. A small ballroom or large conference room would be ideal. Planning guidance for people and equipment is provided for the three crash scales.

While the air carrier is reserving space for the families, FAC, and the JFSOC, the NTSB will be in contact with local authorities to see if their EOC is suitable and available, as well as other local facilities. If the local government can accommodate the JFSOC, the NTSB will coordinate with the air carrier to determine the best location for the JFSOC.

The following is a general description of the duties and responsibilities of members of the JFSOC:

1. **Coordinator:** The JFSOC Coordinator represents the NTSB and is charged with managing the day to day activities of the JFSOC. The coordinator is responsible to the Board's family affairs specialist managing the FAC. The coordinator may assign responsibilities to JFSOC members; facilitates the exchange of information among the JFSOC participants; ensures critical information is kept current; informs other participants of significant developments; collects information that may be used for family briefings; ensures individual logs are kept current; coordinates with NTSB HQs on information to be placed on the Board's web site; and other duties relating to the specific requirements of the accident.
2. **Deputy Coordinator:** A Deputy Coordinator may be designated to assist the Coordinator. The Deputy Coordinator may be from the carrier or from the local emergency management group.
3. **Administrative Officer:** An Administrative Officer will assist the Coordinator with administrative functions, such as preparing drafts of documents, collecting and posting of logs; assembling clips of media coverage of the accident; providing supplies; and other duties relating to the specific requirements of the accident.
4. **Airline representative:** The airline representative is responsible for representing the carrier in the JFSOC. The representative serves primarily in a coordinating role for the carrier. Such things as passing information to the carrier's command center on passengers that have been positively identified (after families have been notified); questions relating to current and future support provided to families by the airline; other agencies' current and future plans and developments; meetings and agendas; and other informative issues are examples of things that the representative may be doing in the JFSOC. Other tasks are maintaining a daily log; monitoring status of injured victims and numbers of family members on and off site; providing input for daily briefings to family members; updating other JFSOC participants on the carrier's activities and developments, and general sharing of information.
5. **Local government representative:** The local government representative is the coordinating point for JFSOC participants on issues of security of the morgue, FAC, hotels for family members and other designated sensitive areas. The representative is also responsible for keeping his/her organization informed of family affairs activities and meetings; updating other JFSOC participants on the local government's activities and developments; maintaining a daily log; providing input for daily briefings to family members; identifying local assets and resources that can be utilized in support

of the operation; and assisting other participants in their understanding of the local community and their leaders.

6. ARC representative: The ARC representative serves primarily in a coordinating role for the ARC and its FAC coordinator and staff processing center; responding to questions that relate to current and future support being provided to families and support workers by the ARC; answering questions related to persons and organizations who want to volunteer services or support; informing the ARC of scheduled meetings; and other informative issues are examples of things that the representative may be doing in the JFSOC. Other tasks are maintaining a daily log; monitoring status of support personnel in the FAC and other sites; answering or redirecting calls from family members who may be off site; providing input for daily briefings to family members; updating other JFSOC participants on the organization's activities and developments; and general sharing of information.
7. DOS representative: The DOS representative serves in a coordinating role between the JFSOC and the DOS. The representative will coordinate issues involving foreign passengers and the support they will need from DOS, the victim's embassy/consulate, and other participants of the JFSOC. Other tasks include maintaining a daily log; monitoring status of foreign victims and their families; providing advice on cultural issues; answering or redirecting calls from foreign government officials; providing input for daily briefings to family members; updating other JFSOC participants on the organization's activities and developments; and general sharing of information. If foreign consulate officials participate in the activities of the JFSOC, the DOS representative will serve as their sponsor.
8. DOJ representative: The DOJ representative is responsible for representing DOJ in the JFSOC. DOJ will not normally be involved in the JFSOC, unless the disaster is considered to be caused by a criminal act. The representative serves primarily in a coordinating and informational role for DOJ. Since the ARC's and DOJ's role of assisting victims is closely related, it is imperative that both organizations closely work with one another. Synchronization of current and future support provided to families by both organizations is critical. Other representative tasks are maintaining a daily log; monitoring of support provided to families; providing input for daily briefings to family members; updating other JFSOC participants on organizational activities and developments; and general sharing of information.
9. FEMA representative: The FEMA representative is not normally involved in the JFSOC, unless the disaster requires substantial Federal government assistance. This may be a disaster that takes place in a highly populated area causing severe structural damage and a substantial number of ground casualties. The representative will be primarily responsible for coordinating the local and state emergency management agency efforts with the family support operation.
10. SA Representative: The SA representative will coordinate with all other JFSOC representatives to assess the needs of crash incident responders, emergency personnel, and others when requested. The representative will coordinate with SA and other

JFSOC representatives to ensure that food, material support or any other needs expressed by victims or responders are addressed. The representative will convey information to Salvation Army officials in the local area to ensure that mobile and fixed feeding stations, material items, comfort stations, shelter and any other needed resources are on scene or otherwise available. The SA representative will update the JFSOC on the availability of SA resources and assist other JFSOC staff members wherever possible.

## Manpower Planning Guidance

Manpower: Person(s) must have decision-making authority or have access to those who do and must be knowledgeable about the structure of their organization.

	Crash scale 1	Crash scale 2	Crash scale 3
NTSB	2	2	2
Airline	2	2	3
ARC	1	2	3
HHS	0	0	0
DOS	*	*	*
FEMA	#	#	#
DOJ	#	#	#
DOD	\$	\$	\$
Local Government	2	3	4
SA	1	2	3

\* Person required if foreign (non-U.S.) personnel are on the flight and additional personnel required if it is an international flight

# Required only if having a role in operation and additional personnel required if organization has a large role

\$ Required if carrier is chartered military flight

## Communications (Telephone) Planning Guidance

	Crash scale 1	Crash scale 2	Crash scale 3
NTSB	4	4	4
Airline	4	4	4
ARC	4	4	4
HHS	0	0	0
DOS #	2	2	2
FEMA #	2	2	2
DOJ #	2	2	2
Local	4	4	4
SA Government	3	3	3

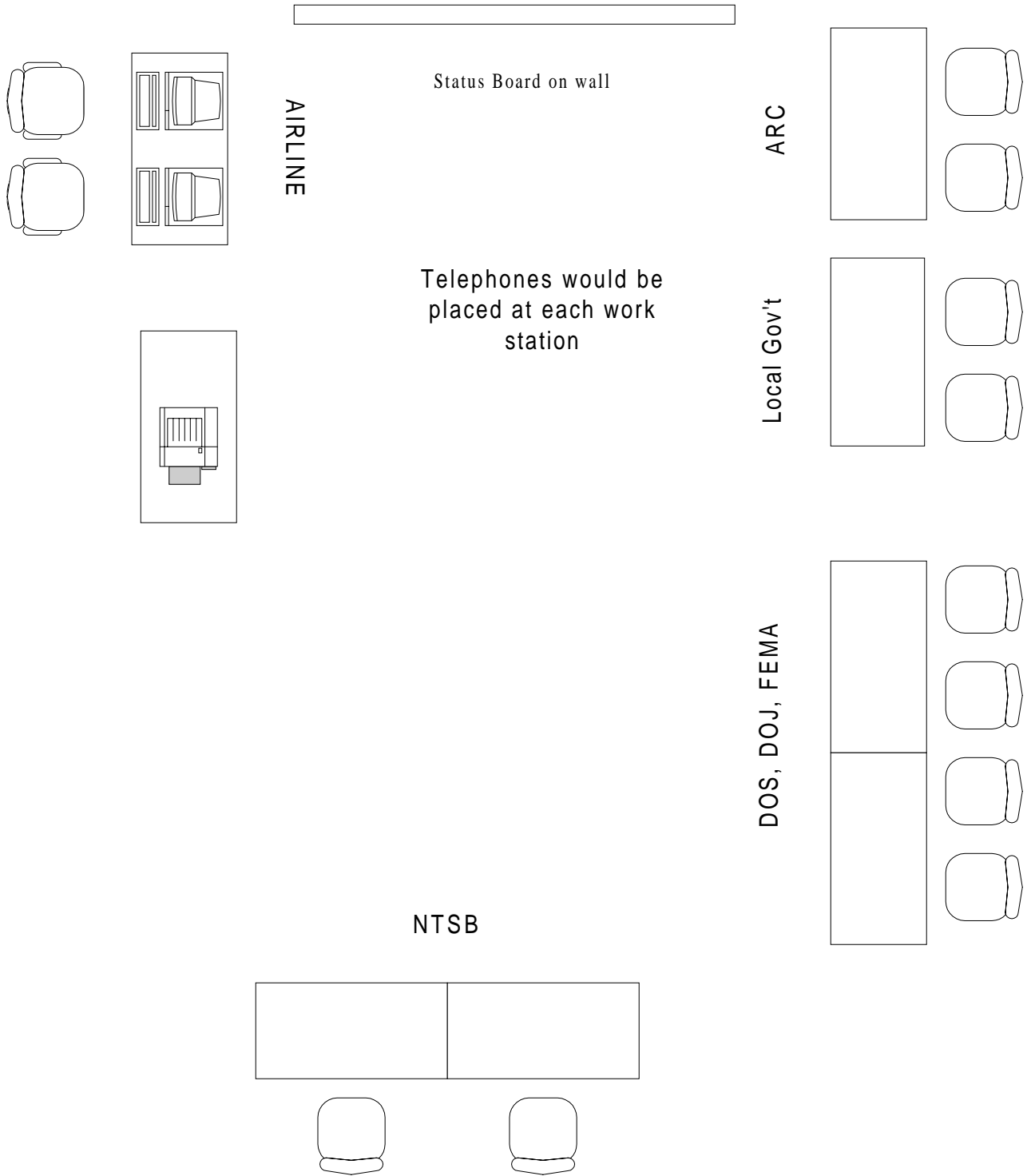
# Necessary if agency is involved in accident response  
Each agency should have access to data ports for computer systems.

## Other Resource Planning Guidance

	Crash scale 1	Crash scale 2	Crash scale 3
Fax machines	2	2	3
Copying machines (high speed) Copier should collate and sort	1	1	2
Printers	2	2	2
Paper shredder	1	1	1



**SUGGESTED LAYOUT FOR JOINT FAMILY SUPPORT OPERATIONS CENTER (JFSOC)**



**JOINT FAMILY SUPPORT OPERATIONS CENTER DAILY STATUS REPORT  
INFORMATION**

- |   |         |
|---|---------|
| 1. Number families notified /number pending notification  | AIRLINE |
| 2. Number families on site /number of families at home  | AIRLINE |
| 3. Number of total family members at the hotel  | AIRLINE |
| 4. Number of families expected to arrive within next 24 hours   | AIRLINE |
| 5. Number of families expected to depart within the next 24 hours   | AIRLINE |
| 6. Number of families at home that have been contacted by their airline representative within the last 24 hours                               | AIRLINE |
| 7. Status of injured personnel and location of family members   | AIRLINE |
| 8. Number of families at the site that have requested ARC assistance and have been assisted by ARC personnel within the last 24 hours         | ARC     |
| 9. Number of families at home that have requested ARC assistance and have been contacted by their ARC representative within the last 24 hours | ARC     |
| 10. Number of workers that have received ARC or SA assistance in last 24 hours  | ARC/SA  |
| 11. Number of injured emergency personnel that have received ARC or SA assistance   | ARC/SA  |
| 12. Status of dental records and x-rays   | ME      |
| 13. Status of ante mortem and disposition of remains interviews   | ME      |
| 14. Status of identification efforts  | ME      |
| 15. Status of families notified of positive identification  | ME      |
| 16. Status of release of remains  | ME      |
| 17. Update on assistance provided to foreign families   | DOS     |
| 18. Update on assistance provided to victims and families   | DOJ     |
| 19. Number of Federal support personnel, to include DMORT and ARC personnel on site and their locations.                                      | ALL     |
| 15. Remarks on daily activities.  | ALL     |
| 16. Remarks on next 24 hours activities.  | ALL     |

## APPENDIX C

### SAMPLE AFTER-ACTION REPORT FORMAT

National Transportation Safety Board  
Director, Office of Family Affairs  
490 L'Enfant Plaza East, SW  
Washington, DC 20594-2000

**SUBJECT: (AVIATION ACCIDENT) AFTER-ACTION REPORT**

Describe such items as how the organization was organized; relationships to other organizations; what the organization's mission was; how many of the organization's personnel were involved; what other resources were provided; transportation and equipment requirements; date arrived/departed; daily activities; and any other item the organization feels important to add to this document. This outline is not intended to limit the content of the input.

Attach as separate enclosures specific areas observed throughout the operation that were both successful and problem areas. The following format is provided:

Topic:

Discussion:

Recommendations:

Also enclose any programs, associated ceremonial material, or video coverage.

## APPENDIX D

# Frequently Asked Questions

*Please note this section was in response to many inquiries for clarification about various topics of the basic plan from some small and foreign air carriers. This is not a substitute for reading and understanding the basic plan.*

### **Is there a specific definition of who constitutes a family member?**

*U.S. Federal and state laws define who constitutes a family member from a legal point of view. These legal definitions may also vary from state to state. The traditional view included spouse, children, mother, father, brother, and sister. Terms such as stepparents, stepsiblings and life partners have become more common in recent years in defining some family environments. It is suggested that airlines should plan on dealing with a variety of family member scenarios and to take each one on a case by case basis.*

### **During the initial hours of an aviation disaster there is a significant amount of verification of facts that the airline needs to do. What information should be given to a family member if they call while the verification process is still in progress?**

*Airlines must establish contact with the family of a victim as soon as possible following an accident. In some cases, a family member may call the airline before the airline has reached out to contact the family that has just called in. During this process it is important to give whatever passenger information about the victim that is available. There are cases in which notifying an additional family member may be necessary. There may be a family member who will be calmer or more helpful to the airline in dealing with his or her family. This person may also be able to assist in other situations, such as families that do not use English as their primary language.*

### **Are there any special considerations for employees assigned to be family escorts?**

*As specialized airline escorts are assigned to family members, it is important to identify any immediate needs the family may have. This may include monetary, childcare, medical or religious needs.*

### **Are there any steps that an airline can take to be better prepared to manage the manifest reconciliation process during an emergency?**

*It is strongly suggested that airlines periodically and randomly select flights that have departed and verify the manifest using each airline's specific emergency procedures for manifest reconciliation. This exercise provides an opportunity for employees to develop the habit of checking manifests against boarding documents. It may also identify procedural problems that can be corrected prior to an accident. After a period of time the airline will be able to establish a confidence level based on the accuracy of the initial manifests.*

**Is there a requirement by an airline to release the names of the passengers and crew to the media?**

*There is no requirement to release the names of passengers and crew to the media. However, once notification has been made, it is acceptable to ask a family how much time they will need to establish contact with other family members. There should be consideration in delaying any release of names until a family has had an opportunity to contact other family members.*

*It is important to keep family members informed, even if there is no additional news. Family members should receive regular updates. Please remember that if the airline states they will call a family member back within a specific time frame, then those calls must be done as close to the time set as possible.*

**Are there any steps an airline can take to limit the number of inquiry calls that follow a disaster?**

*When the media asks the airline for an 800/888 number, it is important for the airline to stress that the numbers are “only for those family members who have reason to believe that their loved one was onboard the flight”. Also, the media should continue to reemphasize the name of the carrier, flight number, airport origination, connection and final destination.*

*The airline should also have an internal “call home” system. Upon learning that the airline has had a major accident, crews and employees should be advised through the company’s internal communications network of the event to call home and advise family members of their well being.*

**Are there any special considerations for family members who wish to travel to the accident city?**

*Legislation requires that airlines will “assure” that they will provide transportation to the accident city and that they “assure” they will assist with the immediate needs of family members, including lodging.*

*It is unreasonable to ask a family member to travel alone to an accident site in which a loved one has been killed or injured. It is important for the airline to consider requests on a case by case basis as there are numerous factors that may require more than one family member or a non-family member to travel to the accident city.*

*Some family members may request to travel to the accident city via an alternate air carrier or alternate mode of travel (rental car, bus, or train). It is suggested that the airline try to honor such requests.*

**Are there any training topics that can help teach employees how to assist families following an accident?**

*It is required that airlines train the employees in a number of areas, including, but not limited to: an understanding of the range of physical and emotional reaction to trauma, including long term*

*effects from post traumatic stress disorder; understanding the need for information by family members and victims; skills to assist with age groups that range from children to the elderly; how to remain caring, non-judgmental and compassionate while assisting those who are suffering or who are extremely demanding or angry.*

*There should be a variety of methods used, including, but not limited to: small groups with role play scenarios; use of survivors and family members who relate their experiences in person or by video tape; timeline of the response from the first hour to the return of the remains and personal effects and first year anniversary; introduction to representatives of Federal agencies that would be involved in the accident and the American Red Cross.*

*It is also very important to tell employees about the effects they may encounter while responding to a major accident. Training should include methods employees can use take care of themselves during and after the response. It should also train them how to look out for co-workers who may be having difficulties.*

*After initial training there should be annual recurrent training.*

### **Does an airline need to file their plan?**

*All carriers that are required to file their assurances must file with both the NTSB and the US DOT.*

### **What issues should an airline consider in managing personal effects?**

*Due to the physical and psychological impact that the recovery process can have on airline employees, it is strongly suggested that a professional third party be employed to respond to and manage the recovery and cataloging of the personal effects effort.*

*Airlines need to allow family members the opportunity to view non-associated personal effects. This can be done via a catalog or a CD with photographs of the items.*

### **What is the AIR Team?**

*The local Red Cross chapter will initiate the Red Cross response in accordance with local planning. These activities may be supported as needed by other Red Cross chapters from within the state. The Aviation Incident Response Team (AIR Team) made up of trained and experienced Red Cross disaster management specialists will mobilize within 4 hours, travel to the site and blend with the existing Red Cross response and coordinate and manage the resulting Red Cross response.*

### **Why was the American Red Cross selected?**

*The NTSB designated the ARC because it met the requirements that were set forth in the legislation. The legislation required an organization that was independent and nonprofit, that had experience in disasters and post trauma communications with families, and could take the responsibility of coordinating the emotional care and support of the families of passengers involved in the accident.*

**Is there any requirement by an airline to meet with the ARC before a disaster occurs?**

*There are no mandates for an airline to meet with the ARC before a disaster. However, it is important that local airline station management and Red Cross chapters coordinate their local planning activities where appropriate to ensure each group's awareness of the other's plans. This will enhance the coordination of the immediate response. An annual pre-disaster meeting can eliminate any misunderstandings or confusion on services that may or may not be provided.*

**What other services can the ARC provide to an airline, family members, or the community where the disaster occurred?**

*The ARC can also provide emotional or critical incident stress debriefing (as required) for local agencies that may not have specialists or training in this area. If needed, they will assist with referrals to families for long term mental health service providers.*

**What is the role of the U.S. State Department during an aviation disaster in the United States or its territories?**

*The U.S. Department of State will be responsible for notifying a foreign government that citizens from their country were involved in an aviation disaster.*

**What assistance can the State Department offer to a foreign air carrier that has had an accident in the United States or its territories?**

*They can assist the affected foreign air carrier with alerting Customs and Immigration that a corporate "Go Team" is enroute to the accident city. They can assist with obtaining required visas or other documents required gaining entry into the United States.*

*Assistance can also be given to family members enroute to the accident city. The State Department will work with Customs and Immigrations to ensure that entry into the United States by these families is done in a timely and professional manner.*

**What is the difference between the Friends and Family reception center and the Family Assistance Center (FAC)?**

*The Friends and Family reception center will be located at the arriving and departing airports. This is a temporary location for family members to gather until a Family Assistance Center is established. The Family Assistance Center will typically be located in a hotel, but may be located in another type of facility, such as a college or community center. This is the location where families will gather to obtain information and assistance.*

**Who is responsible for the FAC?**

*The airline should secure a facility to accommodate all family members traveling to the accident city. Agencies providing support and services to families will work together to insure families are served properly. The NTSB has the overall responsibility to make certain the FAC runs smoothly, but relies upon the cooperation and support of all contributing organizations.*

### **How will professionals and other service agencies in the local community be utilized?**

*ARC has been designated as the non-profit organization responsible for family care and mental health. In this capacity they will manage the recruitment, training and support of all volunteers, including those in the local community, through a Staff Processing Center. It is the intent of the ARC and the NTSB that local professionals and organizations affiliated with a disaster response agency/organization, spontaneous individual volunteers and groups are integrated in order to provide support to the incident as required.*

### **Who is considered family for access to the FAC?**

*Today's family often does not have traditional boundaries. Any definition of "family member" should take into consideration that many individuals consider themselves to be the family of the victim, even though the law does not formally recognize the relationship. This would be the case for a fiancée or long-time companion. Family member will be defined in broad terms for the purpose of FAC access.*

### **How do families not traveling to the accident city get information and support?**

*A conference call bridge will be used during family member briefings. Families not traveling to the accident city will be provided a toll-free number to connect to the bridge. In addition, the airlines will maintain contact and provide support to the family and the ARC can provide support through their chapters in the local community.*

### **Who is responsible for the expenses associated with the FAC?**

*The airline is generally responsible for reasonable expenses associated with the set up and operation of the Family Assistance Center.*

### **How do other service providers interact with the American Red Cross?**

*The ARC is interested in the assistance of others that can help at an accident. They will establish a staff-processing center to insure the best use of all resources. Other providers can contact the ARC through the processing center or can contact their local chapter of the ARC in advance if interested in assisting.*

### **How will the airlines, local emergency responders, ARC, and other Federal agencies coordinate the services delivered to family members?**



*These services for families will be coordinated through a Joint Family Support Operation Center (JFSOC). The operations center will be facilitated by a member of the NTSB Office of Family Affairs and will have representation from each organization providing assistance. This will insure efficient use of resources and sharing of information.*

### **What type of training will airline escorts need to work with the family members?**

*Many airlines have initiated extensive training for their family member escorts. For those who have not, it is important that the escorts understand the dynamics of working in this environment, what is expected of them, basic understanding of grief and trauma, and effective communication with families experiencing complicated grief.*

### **How do the family members get answers to their individual questions?**

*First, they should ask their airline escort/representative for answers to their questions. If the airline representative can not answer the question, they will notify their supervisor. The supervisor will either provide the answer or ask assistance from the agency that is most likely to have the answer.*

### **What areas of consideration should airports have in planning to assist families during the first few hours of an aviation disaster?**

*Although airports are not currently required to plan for family assistance issues, airports should plan to assist passengers and their families during the initial hours of a disaster.*

*This is especially critical for those airlines that have limited manpower or are charter operations that may have no company representation at the airport.*

*Consideration should be given to providing family members a secluded Friends and Family reception area in which to gather while awaiting information from the airline about their loved one. Airline clubs, conference rooms, or restaurants can serve this purpose. This room should be away from the media and should have restrooms in or near by. Police officers should be used to secure the room and the immediate area from the general public. If at all possible, choose a room that does not have a view that overlooks the crash site or recovery operation. Local Red Cross chapters and Salvation Army Centers of Operations should be included in planning sessions as they can provide mental health and health (nurses) services personnel, as well as other needed local resources, to assist airline staff with families at this location.*

*If the room or airline club has a television(s), it would be best to leave at least one television on and give family members the option to stay in that room or to stay in an area that does not have a television or one that is turned off. This option will allow those family members that wish to watch the news coverage of the disaster to do so.*

### **What areas of consideration should be given when airports are reviewing their airport emergency plans?**

*If an airport's plan calls for sealing off access to the airport or terminals during an emergency, consideration should be given to asking local airline management to determine a list of those employees who would be required to have access to the airport or terminal(s) during such a period. Airport operations access (AOA) badges for these individuals should be issued with a unique indicator. Some airports have used the following indicators, "COMMAND POST", "EMERGENCY ACCESS", "INCIDENT RESPONSE", "DISASTER RESPONSE" or a large letter "E". Once a format is chosen, the information is relayed to all law enforcement agencies that would be used to seal off the airport. This should allow those airline/airport personnel to gain access when roadways are closed.*

*Airports should consider placing large signs at their predetermined staging and emergency access areas and gates. These signs should be reflective, preferable white on red wording and in simple text. For example, STAGING AREA "A" or MUTUAL AID ACCESS GATE #5. These simple signs would assist in eliminating any confusion for mutual aid agencies that may respond to the airport or who have periodic personnel changes.*

*Airports should review and contact all of the emergency service agencies within a five (5) mile radius of the airport. These agencies should receive aircraft emergency ingress/egress familiarization and training. Airport fire services can coordinate with airlines to arrange familiarization tours of various airline aircraft types.*

*There should be pre-accident meetings with local emergency planners, hospitals, American Red Cross, city, county, state police and fire services, and clergy.*

**Are there any special considerations about moving wreckage after life safety efforts have been completed?**

*Once the event has moved from a rescue to a recovery operation, the area should be sealed off until the first NTSB representative arrives on the scene and takes charge. **If at all possible, pieces of wreckage should not be moved.** If there is a need to move pieces of the wreckage, every effort to photograph the wreckage should be made prior to disturbing the items.*

**If the accident is caused by a criminal act, who will be in charge?**

*In a scenario in which the accident was caused by a criminal act, the FBI will be the lead agency. The NTSB will support the FBI with technical expertise. Even if it is not a criminal act, local authorities must ensure that all wreckage is preserved and not moved unless necessary for life safety activities*

**What resources can the NTSB provide to a medical examiner or coroner in the way of personnel, equipment and temporary morgue facilities?**

*Under the Federal Family Assistance Plan for Aviation Disasters, the NTSB will coordinate and integrate the resources of the Federal Government to support the efforts of the local and state government. The Department of Health and Human Services/Office of Emergency Preparedness (DHHS/OEP) has been designated as the primary agency for "Victim Identification and Forensic and Medical Services."*

*The Public Health Service, a division of DHHS has developed a Disaster Mortuary Operational Response Team (DMORT) and mobile morgue to provide manpower and technical assistance to support local medical examiners or coroners in times of an aviation disaster.*

*In addition, under the Federal plan, the NTSB can call upon the resources of the Department of Defense (DOD) and Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) Disaster Squad to provide additional support.*

### **What is DMORT?**

*DMORT stands for Disaster Mortuary Operational Response Team. The team is set up to provide professional personnel and technical support and assistance to the local medical examiner or coroner in forensic services and victim identification. The team is composed of forensic pathologists, forensic anthropologists, forensic dentists, medical investigators, funeral directors and other technical support staff.*

### **What is the Portable Morgue Unit?**

*The DMORT Portable Morgue Unit (DPMU) has been developed to support the processing and identification of victims in the event of a mass fatality incident. The DPMU is a packaged system containing all the equipment and supplies required to establish and operate a temporary morgue facility under austere field conditions and/or augment local morgue capabilities. It is designed to be deployed by land, sea and air transport.*

### **What is the FBI Disaster Squad?**

*The FBI has a team of highly trained experts in the area of fingerprint identification. This team is normally activated simultaneously with the DMORT and will provide any assistance to the local medical examiner or coroner in the area of fingerprint identification.*

### **In addition to the conventional means of identification, can DNA be used as another method of identification?**

Dental records and x-rays along with fingerprints are normally the primary methods used in victim identification. DNA will be used as a last resort and only after all conventional means of identification are exhausted.

### **Will autopsies be performed on all flight crew and passengers?**

*Generally speaking, the local medical examiner or coroner has jurisdiction and determines if autopsies will be conducted. The NTSB has specific requirements that the flight crew is autopsied and full toxicology tests are performed. Depending on the circumstances of the crash, the NTSB investigator-in-charge will consult with the medical examiner or coroner to determine if additional autopsies are required.*

### **What is a FAA toxicology kit and how do I go about getting one?**

*A FAA toxicology kit is a kit that provides specimen collection vessels and instructions to the medical examiner in obtaining fluid and tissue samples needed by the FAA to test for drugs and alcohol in the blood system of the flight crew.*

*Generally, medical examiner offices throughout the country should have at least four kits on hand in their facility. If the medical examiner or coroner does not have access to kits, the NTSB team through the FAA representative will provide them.*

### **How is ante mortem information obtained from family members?**

*Generally, the local medical examiner or coroner is responsible for obtaining medical record information from family members. However, in the event the local jurisdiction does not have enough staff to interview family members, trained DMORT members can be used to assist the local jurisdiction in interviewing family members.*

### **Is the NTSB responsible for making positive identification of victims in the disaster?**

*The local coroner or medical examiner is responsible for making positive identification of victims. The NTSB can provide additional resources, such as the DMORT and/or the mobile morgue from the Department of Health and Human Services. These resources are available to help local authorities manage a large number of victims.*

### **How does the local medical examiner or coroner request assistance?**

*The medical examiner or coroner should contact the Forensic Specialist, Office of Family Affairs, at the NTSB in Washington, DC.. The specialist will ask them specific questions on the number of fatalities and what resources the medical examiner/coroner has or doesn't have in order to meet their responsibilities. The NTSB will activate the DMORT and FBI Disaster Squad at the request of the medical examiner or coroner. The telephone number is 202-314-6290.*