



**College of Medicine**

Department of Pathology, Immunology and Laboratory Medicine  
Florida Emergency Mortuary Operations Response System

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Friday, October 15, 2004

TO: Robert A. Smith, Ph.D.  
Director Emergency Operations  
Florida Department of Health

FROM: Larry R. Bedore  
FEMORS Commander

SUBJECT: After Action Report – Hurricane Frances, September 1-8, 2004, Mission #189

**Executive Summary**

This was the second alert of FEMORS since its inception in June 2002. FEMORS was able to determine its response capability within a few hours, provide pre-storm advice to medical examiners in the path of Frances, stand down its members when significant fatalities did not materialize, and assist the District 19 Medical Examiner with contingency plans for managing a potential surge of funeral home cases.

- FEMORS was placed on alert at 2:35 pm Wednesday, September 1, 2004.
- FEMORS developed a Ready List of 90 team members who would be able to respond (assuming they were not impacted by Frances' path).
- FEMORS provided pre-storm contact information to medical examiner districts in Frances' path on Friday September 3, 2004, suggesting pre-storm contact with the local EOC and methods to request assistance if the need arose.
- Landfall occurred approximately 2:00 am Sunday, September 5, 2004.
- FEMORS was not activated, advised to stand down for Frances, and to prepare for Hurricane Ivan at 8:30 am Tuesday, September 7, 2004.
- FEMORS assisted District 19 Chief Medical Examiner Roger Dr. Mittleman throughout Wednesday, September 8<sup>th</sup> when questions arose about a potential 50-100 remains at funeral homes without power for cooler space. Funeral homes resolved the issue by sharing resources.
- Approximately 60 labor hours were expended in this alert.

**Lessons Learned**

- Pre-storm notices to medical examiner offices should arrive early on a business day well in advance of the storm. The Friday afternoon delivery of the pre-storm notices was difficult to accomplish as some offices had sent staff home early to prepare for the storm due over the weekend.
- Non-medical examiner deaths for which doctors cannot be contacted due to disrupted communications, or remains for which burial must be delayed due to flooding, may require establishing a temporary storage facility to mitigate a public health hazard.

**Event Time Line****September 1, 2004, Wednesday**

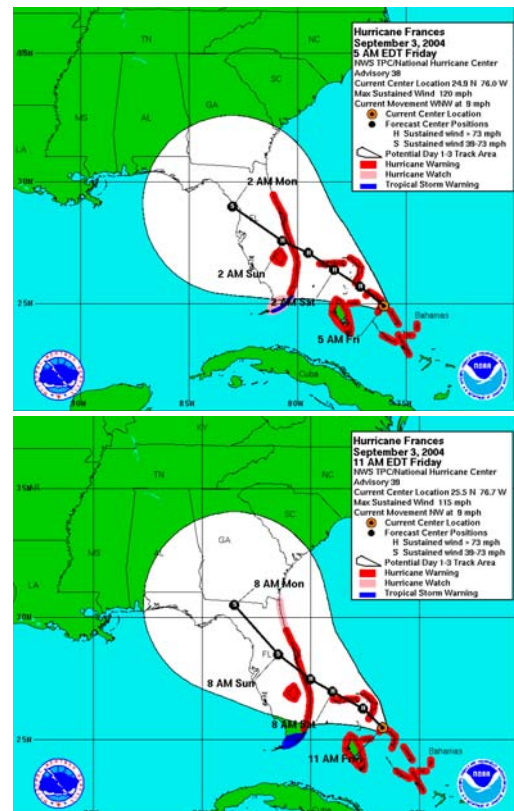
- 2:37 pm Mike MacDonald at SEOC, ESF8 desk contacted Commander Larry Bedore to put teams on alert for Hurricane Frances. Mission #189 assigned.
- 4:00 pm All FEMORS members were alerted and requested to reply if able to respond.
- 9:00 pm Go Team message sent with note that a smaller team 8-10 would respond when activated to assess and report back on needs.
- 11:59 pm Replies from 46 members ready to respond were received.

**September 2, 2004, Thursday**

- 8:15 am Commander Bedore called Mike MacDonald at SEOC, ESF8 desk to request two reefers and one RV for command center be placed on standby. Location of reefer released after Charley to be tracked down.
- 8:45 am Commander Bedore called Pat Brewer who would be able to respond with his RV if needed.
- 10:30 am Commander Bedore called NexTel requesting Wireless Priority Service (WPS). He was directed to web site <http://www.wps.ncs.gov/> where applications were made to have Administrative Chief (Director of Finance) Kelly House designated as primary Point of Contact (POC), Program Director Dr. Bruce Goldberger designated as alternate POC, and Commander Bedore added to the service.
- 11:30 am Mike MacDonald at SEOC, ESF8 desk called to advise trailers and RV are on standby.
- 3:00 pm FEMORS ID cards (non-individual specific) printed for Frances.
- 3:45 pm Commander Bedore received an e-mail from Bryan Brown, WPS Coordinator, indicating that requests must come through DOH. Messages passed on to ESF8 but e-mails were not being accepted.

**September 3, 2004, Friday**

- 6:00 am Commander Bedore renewed efforts to get WPS data to ESF8.
- 8:00 am Commander Bedore was advised by Admin Chief that UF system may be taken off line as of noon in anticipation of the storm. Alternate e-mail systems with Blackberry and Yahoo services were established.
- 9:20 am UF servers will remain on line unless storm strengthens again.
- 9:30 am Commander Bedore contacted ESF8 (850-921-0218). E-mail messages are now getting through. They would review the data and advise on WPS.
- 11:00 am Commander Bedore issued Update 1 to all members.
- 1:30 pm Mike MacDonald, ESF8, contacted Commander Bedore to advise that although DOH may wish to add some of their staff to this service, FEMORS as a grant funded entity might be treated separately. He will call Bryan Brown to see about getting the applications already submitted approved independently from DOH.
- 3:00 pm Mike MacDonald, ESF8 advised that Mohammad was coordinating WPS requests at 850-591-1800.
- 3:05 pm Commander Bedore sent e-mail messages to targeted medical examiners districts  
District 18 Dr. PaulinoVassalo



District 19 Dr. Roger Mittleman  
 District 15 Dr. Lisa Flanagan  
 District 9 Dr. Jan Garavaglia  
 District 10 Dr. Stephen Nelson  
 Messages failed to reach Drs. Vassalo and Mittleman,  
 Flanagan, and Garavaglia. Phone service is out also.

3:10 pm Commander Bedore contacted Mohammad Amirzabeh (850-591-1800) who requested the three phone numbers to be added. Email failed but fax to 850-488-0445 worked.

4:45 pm Help message to Dr. Flanagan was delivered via Investigator Doug Jenks.

5:00 pm Help message to Dr. Garavaglia was delivered via Sheri Blanton for District 9.

11:00 pm Team member response level reached 86 on standby.  
 Storm course continued to shift.

### September 4, 2004, Saturday

1:15 am Dr. Nelson acknowledged receipt of e-mail re FEMORS help.

5:00 am Storm had slowed, lost strength and landfall would occur during the nighttime hours.

8:00 am Team member John Williams, District 19 Chief Odontologist, provided additional contact information for Dr. Mittleman. Resending of e-mail to him and Investigator Rick Wilson completed.

9:30 am Responder list was revised to show available personnel by specialty.

9:40 am Commander Bedore e-mailed ESF8 requesting a fax number for contact

10:40 am Template reporting and recording forms were sent to Go Team.

1:15 pm Kathy at ESF8 advised Commander Bedore that the RV and trailers had arrived at Tallahassee and requested to know where they should be dispatched to. She was informed that when ESF8 advises FEMORS of the location of greatest need and deploys FEMORS, the vehicles should be sent to the same location. She will so advise Bill Dunlap who oversees that section.

11:00 pm Commander Bedore processed 12 new members from web site and updated the response list. Total membership was 294 while the number ready to respond was 90.

### September 5, 2004, Sunday

2:00 am Frances made landfall at Martin and St. Lucie Counties.

7:15 am Jim Lutten, MEC, advised Commander Bedore that MEC was standing by if needed.

9:00 am Edwena Johnson, Medical Examiner District 17 Administrator advised Commander Bedore that District 17 was fine, building was intact, they had power and no reports of death. She had spoken with District 19 yesterday but was not able to establish contact today.



9:20 am Telisha Runyon, SEOC, ESF8 called Commander Bedore (850-245-4444, ext 2042). She began to readdress the question of where the RV and trailers were to be sent when she realized the follow up messages said they would go wherever FEMORS got deployed to. She was advised of the status of District 17 for adding a note to the file.

11:58 am Commander Bedore lost power at home

5:50 pm Commander Bedore sent Blackberry e-mail to Go Team about Panhandle strike, no travel if sustained winds are over 50 mph.

11:26 pm Lori Recca reported no deaths in Martin County so far.



### **September 6, 2004, Monday**

7:10 pm Commander Bedore contacted ESF8 inquiring about FEMORS stand down. Briefing was in progress, someone would call back.

### **September 7, 2004, Tuesday**

8:30 am Commander Bedore contacted ESF8 inquiring about FEMORS stand down. Mike MacDonald advised Frances is over but Ivan is approaching so standby will continue. New mission number not yet assigned. RV and reefers will be kept at Tallahassee for now in case they are needed for Ivan.

9:30 am Commander Bedore sent Blackberry e-mail to all standby personnel regarding stand down for Frances and stand-by for Ivan.

11:00 am Gretchen Iskander, ESF8, contacted Commander Bedore requesting that the RV be sent to Indian River for a group of nurses who have little resources. OK given provided another RV was located should Ivan require activation. Two reefers would remain at Tallahassee.

3:22 pm Commander Bedore's power was restored.

### **September 8, 2004, Wednesday**

12:00 noon Thomas Ralph contacted Commander Bedore to advise of a developing problem for funeral directors in District 19. Natural deaths with no doctor to sign were stacking up. Funeral homes might need assistance with temporary refrigerated storage.

12:20 pm Commander Bedore contacted Dr. Mittleman who advised there were many natural deaths for which funeral homes cannot find doctors to sign the DC mostly due to lack of phone service and offices closed due to storm damage. He was reluctant to accept them as medical examiner cases and lacks storage space although he does have one reefer parked outside for his regular cases. He said a funeral director named Rick Haisley (office 772-461-5211, cell phone 772-201-2544) was trying to coordinate with Clint Sterber of the Indian River EOC (772-462-2575). He also advised that Clint was trying to locate hospital doctors who would sign out the natural cases thus keeping them out of the medical examiner system. Commander Bedore advised that even those doctors would have to gather and review medical records before signing death certificates. Because families had selected funeral homes, permission to embalm might be easier than using the method Dr. Joe Davis used for earlier Miami-Dade disasters. Dr. Mittleman advised he would provide Rick with Commander Bedore's phone number as he preferred to stay out of non-medical examiner affairs.

12:35 pm Rick Haisley contacted Commander Bedore to advise that many funeral homes in the four county district were overloaded with remains as some had been destroyed and others had accepted the overload. Compounding the problem, burials were being delayed because the cemeteries were under water still and burials could not take place until the water receded. Commander Bedore advised that

- FEMORS could set up a temporary holding facility at the medical examiner's office, with Dr. Mittleman's approval, to manage remains while waiting for doctors to be located or dispositions to be completed. Most cases have family involvement so embalming could take place but storage might still be needed. Rick said the conservative number of remains to be managed was between 50 and 100. Commander Bedore advised that he would recontact Dr. Mittleman to see if the plan was workable.
- 1:00 pm Commander Bedore contacted Clint Sterber of the Indian River EOC to offer FEMORS services if needed. Clint was aware of the method for requesting the service but the general belief was that if requested the County would have to pay the tab because FEMA would not reimburse for aiding private businesses such as funeral homes.
- 1:10 pm Commander Bedore contacted Dr. Mittleman to advise of Clint's comments and reasons for not calling FEMORS. Also discussed was a plan for FEMORS to staff and manage two reefers and one command post in the parking lot at the medical examiner's to manage storage and release of remains for funeral home cases. The medical examiner location was preferred because all funeral homes were familiar with it and major roadways to it were clear. That would keep medical examiner staff free to manage daily caseload.
- 1:30 pm Commander Bedore e-mailed Go Team with an advisory of situation in District 19.
- 2:00 pm Commander Bedore contacted Mike MacDonald at SEOC with an advisory of the situation in District 19. Mike advised that the two reefers and RV were still parked at the SEOC (another had been located for the nurses in Indian River).
- 2:05 pm Commander Bedore contacted Deputy Commander Paul Taylor to advise of situation. Paul would be available to go and agreed a small team of 5-6 could manage the operation.
- Initial team would consist of:
- Commander Bedore
  - Deputy Commander Taylor
  - Mortuary Officer Pat Brewer
  - Mortuary Officer Greg Klimetz
  - Mortuary Officer Robert Bradley
  - Medical Investigator Meghan Simrak
- 2:15 pm Commander Bedore contacted Pat Brewer who advised he would be available after Saturday.
- 2:20 pm Commander Bedore contacted Greg Klimetz who advised he would be available.
- 2:25 pm Commander Bedore contacted Meghan Simrak leaving a message.
- 2:30 pm Mike MacDonald, SEOC, contacted Commander Bedore to advise that SEOC feels FEMA would cover the expense on a 75% (Federal)/25% (State) split and that the County's share would be one-half of the 25% as this would be considered a public health risk.
- 2:35 pm Rick Haisley contacted Commander Bedore to advise he had just gotten off the phone with Clint at the EOC. He felt Clint now understood the scope of the problem and "is onboard". Clint told him the EOC was "not money driven".
- 2:45 pm Dr. Mittleman contacted Commander Bedore advising he had just spoken with Dr. Steve Nelson, Chairman of the Medical Examiners Commission. Dr. Mittleman has decided to accept such cases as naturals and asked if FEMORS had forensic pathologists who could assist so he could concentrate on routine cases. Hunt Scheuerman was mentioned as a member who could be cross-appointed for District 19 as an example. Dr. Mittleman was also advised that FEMORS had medical investigators who could track down the medical records for Dr. Scheuerman to review.
- 3:40 pm Dr. Mittleman contacted Commander Bedore advising the funeral homes had worked out a sharing arrangement for remains and FEMORS would not be needed.
- 4:10 pm Commander Bedore e-mailed the Go Team advising them of a stand down.
- 4:50 pm Wes Smith, Orlando Sentinel 407-540-5000, contacted Commander Bedore inquiring about storm impact on funeral services. Article would run in Thursday's edition.