

Federal Emergency Management Agency National Urban Search & Rescue Response System



US&R Branch Update for National TFR Teleconference

August 24, 2021

CURRENT OPERATIONS

- 25 TFs are now FMC / 3 are now unavailable as Type 1 TFs
 - (MD-TF1, TN-TF1, VA-TF1/USA-1)
- 2021 response operations:
 - Presidential Inauguration NSSE
 - City of Surfside, Florida Building Collapse
 - Tropical Cyclone Henri
- Follow-up to response to Surfside, FL Building Collapse incident
 - Continue to research issues / lessons learned regarding COVID-19 positive (PCR) test results of deployed System resource members
 - US&R COVID-19 Ad Hoc Group meetings conducted with more scheduled in order to review and update operational guidelines
 - Discussion on possible consideration of mandatory vaccination requirement for all deploying System personnel
 - OCC research and preliminary guidance
 - "Wait for final DHS / OPM guidance on requirement for individuals"
 - Consider temporary policy to deploy only full-vaccinated TFs and adjusting the TF Deployment Rotation Matrix accordingly
 - AAR / CIP process underway (funded via the Disaster after approval from R-IV and FCO)
 - Coordinating with FCO re: follow-up on issue of senior-level political interest regarding search technology
 - Meeting with FEMA GIS Chief re: GIS support to US&R
 - US&R-specific expertise / strategic longer-term vision

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CURRENT OPERATIONS (continued)

- COVID-19 Pandemic
 - How we respond to operations in the COVID-19 pandemic continues to be the highest tactical and operational priority in our System
 - Leader's intent (Branch, System, COVID-19 AHG)
 - Concept of responding to a COVID-19 incident with the disaster itself being the "Incident Within an Incident" (IWI)
 - COVID-19 Priority Study Ad Hoc Group
 - PD 2020-020 (previous reference: GM 2020-32c)
 - Four phases
 - Phase 4 (mandatory LMS training module) still a work in progress
 - FEMA - current Agency-wide posture
 - On-going discussions regarding deployment of vaccinated versus unvaccinated FEMA Full-time / Disaster Reservist personnel
 - NRCC status
 - ESF #9 Desk

Question: With the influx of COVID-19 Delta variants, will there be any change to our response requirements?

PREVIOUS OPERATIONS

- Consideration: 20-Year Anniversary of 9/11 - WTC & Pentagon

Question: If there is anything that the system is planning for the 20th anniversary of 9/11?

STATUS OF FEMA HQ PERSONNEL

- FEMA Administrator confirmed and sworn in since our last meeting
- US&R Branch (since last meeting): Program Specialist Tawana Mack / Vice: Conklin position and Vice: Malcolm position vacancy

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BUDGET / FINANCIAL / AUDIT ISSUES

- FY21 Budget Spend Plan
 - Meeting with System leadership on January 28th
 - Strategic Group concurrence on February 19th
 - Review and approval by FEMA leadership
 - Draft FY21 Budget Spend Plan finalized
 - Efforts to obtain supplemental funding (PDO process)
- Reimbursement Claims
 - Highest administrative priority
 - Re-prioritization of Branch staff work assignments (“All Hands” approach for majority of work time)
 - Inordinate amount of time reviewing claims, which leads to mentoring the TFs on the documentation required to satisfy the auditors, and then subsequently having to review the entire submission over again
 - Sometimes three full reviews are required on the same claim. It is difficult to predict exact hours required, but instead of taking up to 120 hours to review a Type 1 TF claim, some claims are now taking an overall time of up to 200 hours each
 - “Brown Bag” sessions
 - Development of revised / current US&R Reimbursement Policy / Manual
 - Work continues on temporary staffing augmentation options to assist in clearing backlog of existing reimbursement claims
 - Status of potential use of Ops Cadre / “US&R Reservists”
 - Potential augmentation to US&R Technical Support contract
 - Coordination with OCFO – Field Based Operations on-going

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BUDGET / FINANCIAL / AUDIT ISSUES (continued)

- Audits –
 - Previous recent Audits
 - OIG-20-04 - Audit of DHS Fiscal Year 2017 Purchase and Travel Card Programs
 - Improper Payments (IPERIA) audit(s)
 - DHS Office of Inspector General Fiscal Year 2020 Financial and Internal Control Audit
 - Current Audit
 - FY21 Payment Integrity Information Act Assessment
 - New audit action by the OCFO Risk Management and Compliance (RMC) Branch / Guidehouse Contracting (formerly IPERIA)

OPERATIONAL ISSUES

- OCONUS Operations
 - US&R Pre-Positioned Equipment Kit in Puerto Rico
 - Four US&R Branch staff members performed PEK inspection/maintenance trip and supported R-II Caribbean Area Response 2021 Readiness Initiative meeting in PR (June 21st – June 24th)
 - Discussions on US&R PEK with Regions 9 and 10
 - Interim Concept of Operations for HI / Pacific
 - Summary of cost estimate for new (permanent) HI PEK submitted. Looking to compete for other sourcing of funds
 - Revised Concept of Operations
 - Tiered logistical response
 - US&R “Fly Away Kit”
 - Alternative Plans – development of OCONUS Equipment Kit (OEK) Concept of Operations

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OPERATIONAL ISSUES (continued)

Question: OCONUS Response for preposition/ staging and “Notice” or “No-Notice” events

Recent discussions with TFR-N and TFR-Ds regarding use of TF Rotation Matrix versus previous OCONUS methodology

- US&R “Return to Training” Plan being finalized

Question: Return to sponsored trainings

- Training Sub-Group / Advisory Organization
- Conference call conducted with all 28 TFs and System leadership on 8/17. Preliminary timeframes identified for potential course deliveries via expenditure of FY19 Cooperative Agreement training funds.
- Final decisions / scheduling dependent on COVID-19-related considerations for in-person deliveries (i.e., related discussions with OCC on potential mandatory vaccination requirements for participants and corresponding masking/testing parameters)
 - Discussions with FEMA senior leadership (regarding new DHS policy for Secretary-level approvals for in-person events of 50 or more attendees)
 - Pending discussion with US&R Strategic Group and further discussion with FEMA senior leadership
- IST Organizational Changes (work in progress)
 - FEMA US&R Officer / previous ESF #9 Group Supervisor position
 - Evolving discussions w/ N-IMAT program and FEMA senior leaders
 - Type 1 and Type 2 Liaison Officers / previous US&R Specialist position
- IST Rosters (status)
- Rules of Engagement (work in progress)

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OPERATIONAL ISSUES (continued)

- Coordination with SUSAR re: Survey 123 / NAPSIG
 - Discussions on “Hosting Platform” issues with FEMA GIS and WEB-EOC Chiefs
- National US&R Cataloging Initiative (partnership w/ IAFC and SUSAR)
 - IAFC US&R Committee teleconferences

Question: Resource sharing between teams for deployments. Where does that process have to start? Does it need to come from the program office or is it team to team agreement. Example from the Champlain Collapse, MD-TF1 didn't have the capacity to field a type 1 team but mixing XX-TF1 and MD-TF1 together they could. Is this an avenue to consider for future deployments or does the system not want to go down that path?

ADMINISTRATIVE ISSUES

- Previous decision: postponement of all On-Site Meetings, Training and Gatherings for the remainder of CY 2021

Questions: Alert Orders \$10,000

Alert Orders for at least the past years come with \$10,000. With all other costs increasing has thought been given to increase this amount in order to provide the same type of service?

There have been questions on the cost of COVID testing during the ALERT phase. Could this cost be approved and be an additional cost above the \$10,000 – not tied into the \$10,000 or up the \$10,000 to cover the COVID testing?

- In-State MOA Discussions
 - Virginia
 - New York
 - California
 - On-going discussions with OCC / West Division System leadership on previous decision(s) by Cal-OES to deny deployment of CA TFs

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ADMINISTRATIVE ISSUES (continued)

- Pharmaceutical Cache
 - Legal opinion received from OCC regarding the allowability of using Response Cooperative Agreement funding to reimburse US&R Task Forces for acquisition of pharmaceutical supplies on the Approved Equipment Cache List

Question: National CDL license requirement changes and what are other teams doing about it? Does anyone know of a workaround for the training requirements prior to testing new drivers?

- US&R Strategic Group
 - Meeting conducted on April 21st (virtual)
 - Meeting notes issued to US&R System on May 12th (GM #2021-014)
 - Scheduling of next Strategic Group Meeting
 - Will work with Chiefs to schedule a brief meeting to discuss new OCC guidance re:
 - DOT regulations for CDL Driver's mandatory drug-testing policy
 - "Return to Sponsored Training Plan"
 - Priority discussion on consideration of mandatory vaccination requirement for deploying TFs
- US&R Strategic Plan (Seating of AHG accomplished on 8/19/20; work in progress)
- Accountable Property Inventory Requirement (OCAO)
 - Finalized and executed 15% validation methodology with each of the TFs
 - Status of Report of Survey forms / data entry
 - Potential OCAO requirement for "Loan Agreement"
- Title transfer of entire Federal equipment cache inventory to individual Sponsoring Agencies
- UAS issue – legal considerations
 - Discussions with FEMA GIS Chief: Privacy Impact Statement and Privacy Threshold Analysis documents

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ADMINISTRATIVE ISSUES (continued)

- Legal Issues
 - Priority list of issues being worked with OCC
 - Proposed re-write of 44CFR-Part 208
 - Considerations in relation to current issue with MOA/authorities
- US&R System “Summary” Report
 - Similar in concept to “Annual Report”; to highlight accomplishments since 2017 through the present (to include current COVID-19 pandemic and US&R System resource’s contributions at the local / State levels)
- Discussion on Equipment Cache “Table of Allowances” with corresponding Mandatory Individual Items Section
 - Response Operations AHG transition to US&R Branch staff / Logistics Sub-Group
- Bi-Annual Sponsoring Agency Chiefs meeting (one National meeting vs. consideration of individual Divisional meetings)
- US&R Administrative Manual – Annex A
 - Review in progress (to include issues of Term Limits and membership on multiple groups)
- US&R After-Action Review (AAR) Process
 - Proposal finalized to transition to Continuous Improvement Program (CIP) process
 - Potential policy / practice of use of contractors (via funding from DRF); permission needed from OCFO – Field Based Operations
 - Approval received from R-IV / FCO McCool to utilize existing contract to fund US&R CIP report for Surfside, FL building collapse incident response via disaster funds
- Review of Draft EMAP US&R Standards
 - Comments submitted by US&R Branch

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ADMINISTRATIVE ISSUES (continued)

- Coordination with SUSAR President
 - K-9 certification process
 - Cataloging initiative
 - ORE national standard development
- Readiness Assessment Program
 - Administrative Readiness Evaluation (ARE) transitioned to Remote / Virtual Process
 - Original 2021 ARE schedule had 10 AREs
 - Reference: PD 2021-004 – Temporary Deployment Status

Question: Status of canceled ARE's and 2022 ARE's. Will they be rescheduled in 2022 along with the normal allotment of 2022 ARE's?

- Operational Readiness Evaluation (ORE)
 - ORE AHG continues work (w/ members from SUSAR and IAFC)
 - Discussions with SUSAR regarding US&R ORE National Standard