



## Mass Causality Incident

### January 2023

#### Uvalde School Shooting – May 24, 2022

- Uvalde, Texas - small county, 18,000
- School shooting at Robb Elementary School
- Incident lasted 77 minutes
- Justice of the Peace (JOP) was acting coroner on scene – he requested assistance from the chief medical examiner from Bexar County, who brought supplies and assisted
- Word of shooting occurred around noon, JOP did not get formal call until 2:30
- Initial report to JOP was two – three victims, soon found out 16-17, ended up being 22 decedents, including the shooter; 17 injured
- Some contention between law enforcement and JOP on when to move bodies at the scene – they went with scene belonged to LE, bodies belonged to the county
  - Concern for if bodies would have been left at scene overnight
  - Decision was made to move bodies from the scene the night of the shooting
- Scene was awful, but the ringing of students' and teachers' cellphones really stuck in his head forever
- Reunification center was at the Civic Center
  - School had prior agreement with Civic Center
  - All surviving students were bussed to Civic Center
  - Texas Rangers and school district were at Center asking parents to describe clothing and other distinguishing characteristics of their children
  - Staff swabbed parents for DNA
  - Scene was chaotic because of award ceremony that day, some children had left earlier with their parents
  - Parents pushing to get their kids home – all children released by 5:00pm
- Bodies were taken by bus from the school and funeral home to San Antonio where Bexar County medical examiner finalized identification, conducted autopsies, and released bodies to families
  - Bexar County sent their mass casualty evacuation ambulances – each could hold about 15 bodies
- Body of shooter was kept separate, and was taken by hearse to Guadalupe County
- Took until nearly 2:00pm the following day to receive final confirmation on every body's identification
- Medical examiner released the bodies in two groups
- Media was huge
  - Some members of the media rented offices for a year in Uvalde
  - Made sure media never got pictures of victims being loaded onto the bus
- Critical for responders to seek counseling immediately after event
  - They found that food and therapy animals are wonderful tools for responder coping

### Impacts:

- Stress on responders
- Media
- Family demands
- Community recovery

### Preparedness:

- Review your Mass Casualty Incident and Family Assistance Center Plans
- Know your community partners, so when incident occurs, working relationships are already developed and strong
- No incident is the same, be flexible
- Remember mass fatality events are stressful events for everyone, even those who you think can handle it (i.e. medical examiners/coroners), be sure to offer coping strategies
  - Counseling
  - Therapy animals
  - Food
  - Time off
  - Support for work life balance
  - Decreased workloads
  - Wellness programs

### Sources:

<https://files.asprtracie.hhs.gov/documents/fatality-management-in-rural-areas-how-one-jop-oversaw-uvalde-school-shooting.pdf>