



# **CHATHAM COUNTY EMERGENCY OPERATIONS PLAN**

**ESF ANNEX 8  
APPENDIX 8-3  
TAB C**

**OPERATIONS PROTOCOLS  
AND TOOLS – FAMILY  
BRIEFINGS**

**NOVEMBER 2013**



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## **C-1 FAMILY BRIEFING PROTOCOL**

The purpose of the family briefings is to ensure that families have current and accurate information regarding the recovery process, identification of victims, the investigations and other areas of concern. Ensure that families received information first from government agencies in a caring and supportive environment.

### **General Guidelines**

- Always provide information to the families before releasing information to the media.
- Provide family briefings at least twice a day. Maintain a regular schedule for briefings.
- The King County Medical Examiner, or their designee, should be present at all briefings to report on victim identification processes and progress.

### **Family Briefing Procedure**

1. The PIO or the Deputy PIO Family Briefings, in coordination with the FAC Manager and Chatham County Coroner's Office schedules the time and locations of the family briefings.
2. Prepare the schedule for the family briefings.
3. Post the schedule in the FAC and inform families when there are briefings.
4. The logistics team will set up the family briefing room with chairs, conference call equipment, microphones, projectors and other audio/visual equipment as needed.
5. Ensure that there are conference call capabilities for all families not physically at the FAC.
6. The Behavioral Health team will ensure that there are mental health and spiritual care providers present at all family briefings.
7. Translation and interpretation services should be coordinated as needed.
8. Ensure there is an administrative assistance present to transcribe the briefings.
9. The Coroner or their designee will run the family briefings, with representation by the FAC Manager, Law Enforcement, EOCs, and support agencies as necessary
  - Emphasize that the FAC is the best source of current information for the families.
  - Present information in terms that the family members can understand.
  - Repeat important information frequently during the briefings to accommodate families at various levels of receptiveness in the grieving process.
  - Plan for a questions and answers session that may take an hour.
  - Provide copies of transcripts or briefing notes.



## **C-2 EXAMPLE FAMILY BRIEFINGS AGENDA**

The specific content of each family briefing will depend on the situation. The PIO or the Deputy PIO Family Briefings should work with the Coroner's Office, the FAC Manager, and other response agencies to develop the agenda for each briefing. Below is a suggested agenda for a family briefing

- Rescue and recovery efforts
- Victim identification efforts
- Investigation updates
- Site visits, memorial services
- Disposition and return of remains
- Return of personal effects
- Description of services available at FAC



### **C-3 IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS FOR FAMILY BRIEFINGS**

- Briefings should be conducted by individuals in charge of key areas of response, such as the FAC Manager, Coroner, Chief of Police, etc. (or their high level designees). Consistency among the individuals conducting briefings should be maintained.
- Establish a regular schedule for briefings and communicate this information to the families. In general, briefings should occur at least twice daily (e.g. morning and afternoon), but as frequently as necessary. Maintain a consistent briefing schedule even if there is no new information to report.
- Briefings should be provided to families physically at the FAC as well as those away from the FAC. A conference call capability should be made available for families to call in if they are not on site; transcription services are also recommended.
- Information must be communicated to families before statements are made to the media. Briefing messages should be coordinated with the Joint Information Center (JIC)/PIO to ensure talking points are coordinated among relevant agencies and that information being given to families is consistent with messages given to the public.
- Emphasize to families that the FAC is the best source of current and accurate information at each briefing.
- Present information in terms family members can understand.
- Repeat information frequently during briefings to accommodate the different levels of receptiveness, information processing and grieving among family members
- Include question and answer periods after each briefing; this could take up to an hour.
- Be honest with family members if a question cannot be answered, but try to get an answer as quickly as possible, ideally by the next briefing.
- Provide copies of transcripts or notes and any related information sheets or handouts for families to help keep track of the information they are receiving.



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