

About Disaster Mortuary Operational Response Teams

When disasters and public health emergencies occur, there may be more fatalities than local resources are able to manage. When that happens, a state may request [National Disaster Medical System's \(NDMS\)](#) Disaster Mortuary Operational Response Teams (DMORTs) to support local mortuary services on location, focusing on the recovery, decontamination, examination, identification, and return of deceased victims to help families, friends, and communities find closure.

DMORT Expertise

DMORT team members include coroners, funeral directors/mortuary officers, medical examiners, forensic specialists (anthropologists, odontologists, pathologists), dental assistants, autopsy assistants, fingerprint specialists, and diagnostic radiologic technologists, as well as administrative, logistics, security, and safety specialists.

DMORT Capabilities

Working under the authority of the local/state coroner or medical examiner, DMORT members provide technical assistance and consultation on fatality management and mortuary affairs. DMORTs may be called on to provide a wide range of services, including but not limited to:

- Tracking/documenting human remains and personal effects
- Assisting in cause and manner of death
- Collecting ante-mortem or postmortem data
- Collecting medical records, dental records, or DNA of victims from next of kin to assist in victim identification
- Documentation during field retrieval and morgue operations
- Performing forensic dental pathology and forensic anthropology methods
- Preparing, processing, and returning human remains and/or personal effects to appropriate recipients
- Processing and re-interment of disinterred remains
- Providing technical assistance and consultation on fatality management and mortuary affairs
- Establishing temporary morgue facilities



Disaster Portable Morgue Unit

DMORT personnel mobilize with U.S. government provided medical equipment and supplies, and other logistical support to augment state or regional assets. This equipment may include a Disaster Portable Morgue Unit (DPMU), a depository of equipment and supplies that can be used to stand up a complete morgue at a disaster site. Due to its size (5,000 to 8,000 square feet), a DPMU is typically housed in a tent in the open air or in a large unused structure such as a warehouse. DPMUs provide ample room for each step that might be needed, including areas for triaging and admitting human remains, photography and x-ray, examination/autopsy, and post-mortem information collection (e.g., fingerprinting, forensic dentistry, and forensic anthropology).

For more on NDMS specialty teams, visit <https://aspr.hhs.gov/NDMS>.