

# Mass Fatalities Planning

Presented by:

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Des Moines, Iowa

## Iowa Association of County Medical Examiners

Fall Meeting

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West Des Moines, Iowa



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*Our MISSION is to... HELP PEOPLE AND ORGANIZATIONS SUCCEED BEFORE, DURING AND AFTER ANY DISASTER*

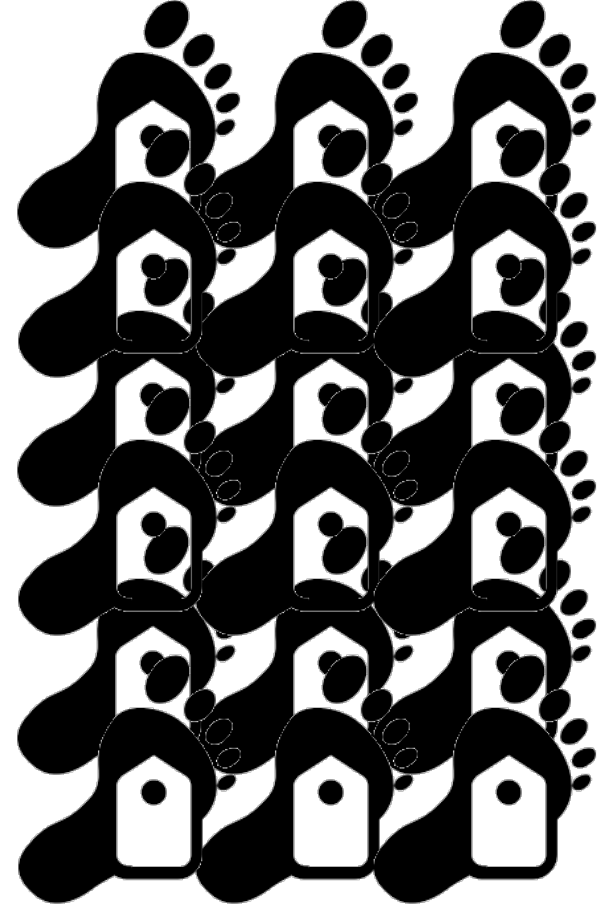
*Our ACTIONS are to... LEAD, SUPPORT, CONNECT AND UNIFY*

*We BELIEVE that... OUR SUCCESS IS MEASURED BY HOW WELL WE HELP OTHERS SUCCEED*



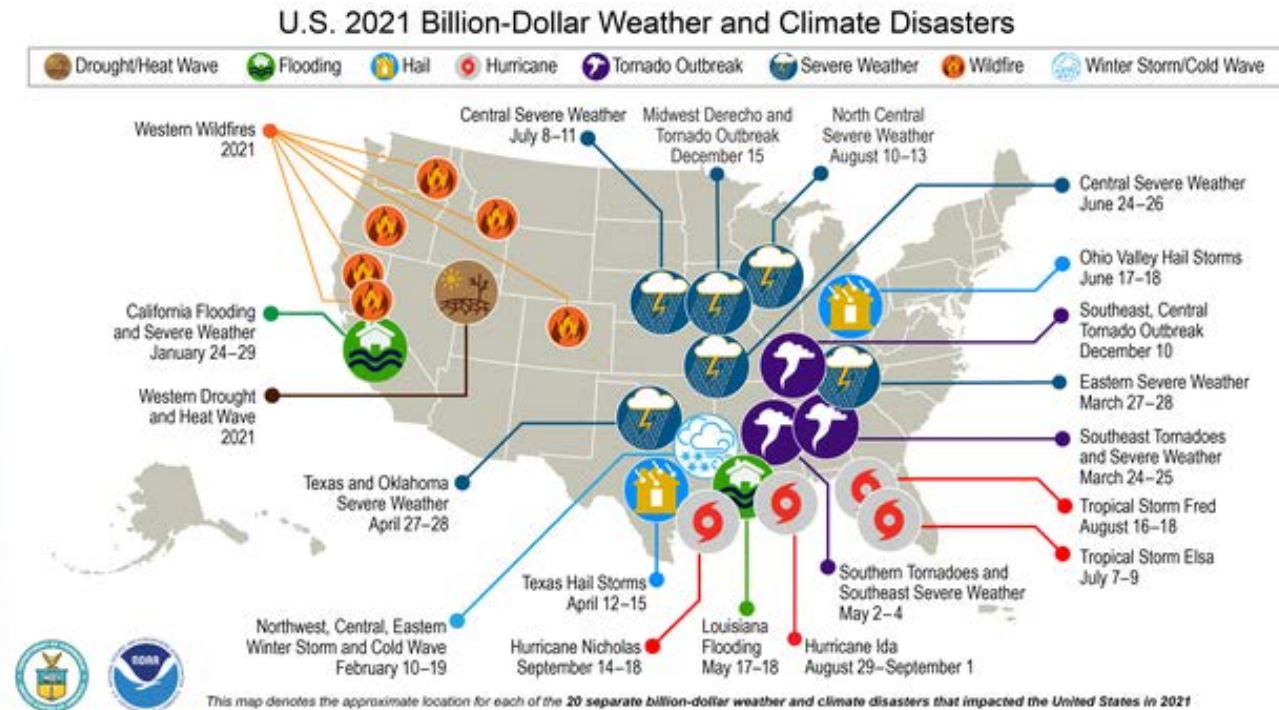
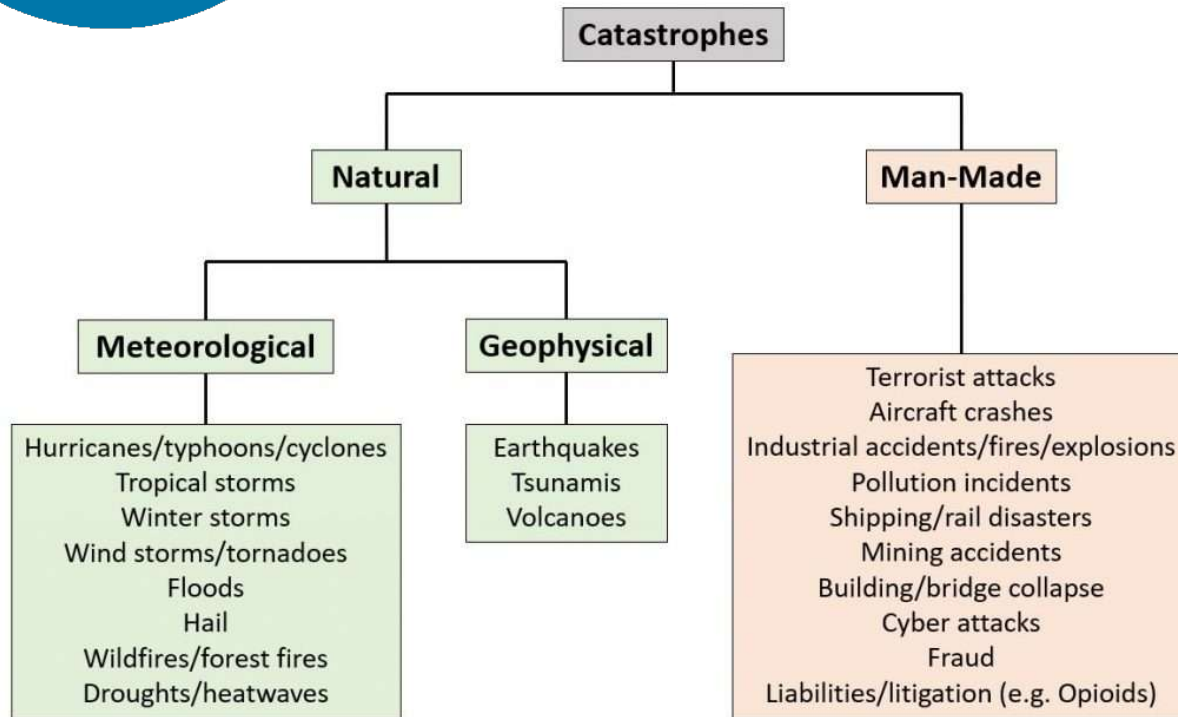
# 1

What is YOUR definition of a “Mass Fatality” Incident?



# 2

## What types of incidents may generate a “Mass Fatality” incident in your jurisdiction?



# 3

Is there a difference between an “emergency” and a “disaster”?



# Is there a difference?


## Emergency

- Sudden, urgent, unexpected event requiring immediate action, usually requiring help.
- Sufficient resources **ARE AVAILABLE**
  - Capable
  - Capacity

## Disaster

- Calamitous event, especially one occurring suddenly and causing great loss of life, damage, or hardship.
- Sufficient resources ARE **NOT AVAILABLE.**
  - Incapable
  - Lack of capacity

Resources = trained and competent people or teams, equipment, supplies, facilities, data/information, systems

- 
1. Scale matters
  2. Risk exists everywhere
  3. Capability and capacity must expand as needed

key  
takeaways

# Learning Objectives



1. Achieve basic understanding of local emergency management purpose and structure
2. Explore the Comprehensive Emergency Plan (CEP) framework and development process
3. Unpack capabilities, activities, tasks and resources required to successfully manage a mass fatalities incident
4. Discuss available resources and opportunities to access additional resources for expanding incidents

# Emergency Management



- Governed by a Countywide Commission
- Commission made up Mayors, Board of Supervisors and Sheriff
- Each county has one or shared with a neighboring county
- Roots go back to cold war era and evolved from local Civil Defense programs
- Purpose is to facilitate the preparation of the community, departments, organizations
- Coordinate response to human-caused and natural disasters
- Assist the community's recovery

Our **MISSION** is to...

Help people and organizations succeed  
before, during and after any disaster.

Our **PRINCIPLED-ACTIONS** are to:

**LEAD**

Set a positive and  
caring example

**SUPPORT**

Provide a helping hand  
to those in need

**CONNECT**

Demonstrate transparency  
through effective communication  
and information sharing

**UNIFY**

Integrate, collaborate and  
organize so that together we are  
greater than the sum of our parts

We **BELIEVE** that  
Our success is measured by how well  
we help others succeed.

# Program Activities

- Hazard Analysis and Risk Assessment
- Planning
- Training
- Exercises
- Damage Assessment
- Resource Management
- Communication and Warning
- Response Operations
- Public Education
- Administration



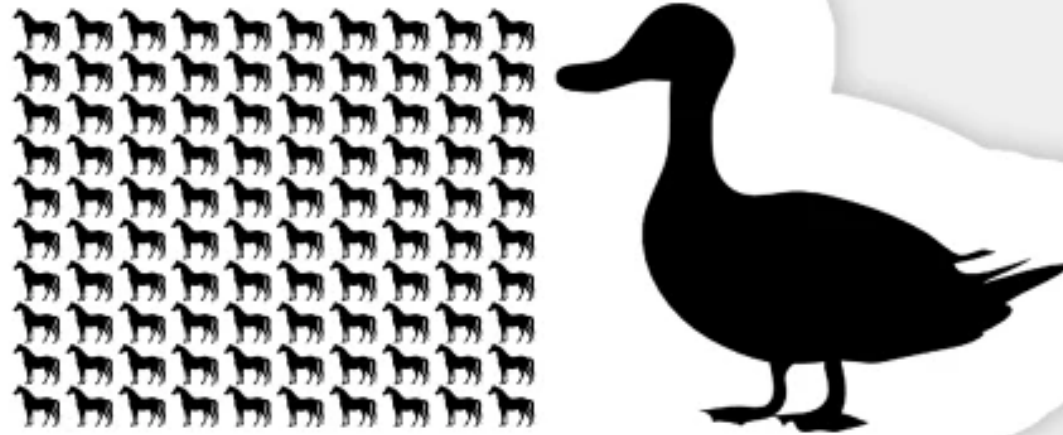
# IN OTHER WORDS

- What could happen? (HARA)
- What do we expect each other to do? (Planning)
- What knowledge, skills and abilities do we need? (Training)
- What can we do to practice? (Exercise)
- How bad is it? (Damage Assessment)
- What teams/equip/supplies/etc do we need to respond/recover? (Resource Management)
- How do notify/warn each other? (Communication and Warning)
- Who's in charge? (Response Operations)
- What should the public know to protect themselves? (Public Education)
- How do we get this all done and pay for it? (Administration)



- The information I am going to share should NOT automatically override your organization's policies, legal requirements, or practices
- The information provided is intended to provoke thought, discussion and considerations for you and your organization
- Always consult your administrator, board, regulatory entities, or legal representatives prior to acting outside of your existing policies, practices, regulations or laws
- You know your job way better than I ever will. This is not about how to do your job. This is to provoke thought about how to do your job with others in a large-scale incident where resources are scarce or stressed.

Convert big problems into a series of smaller problems



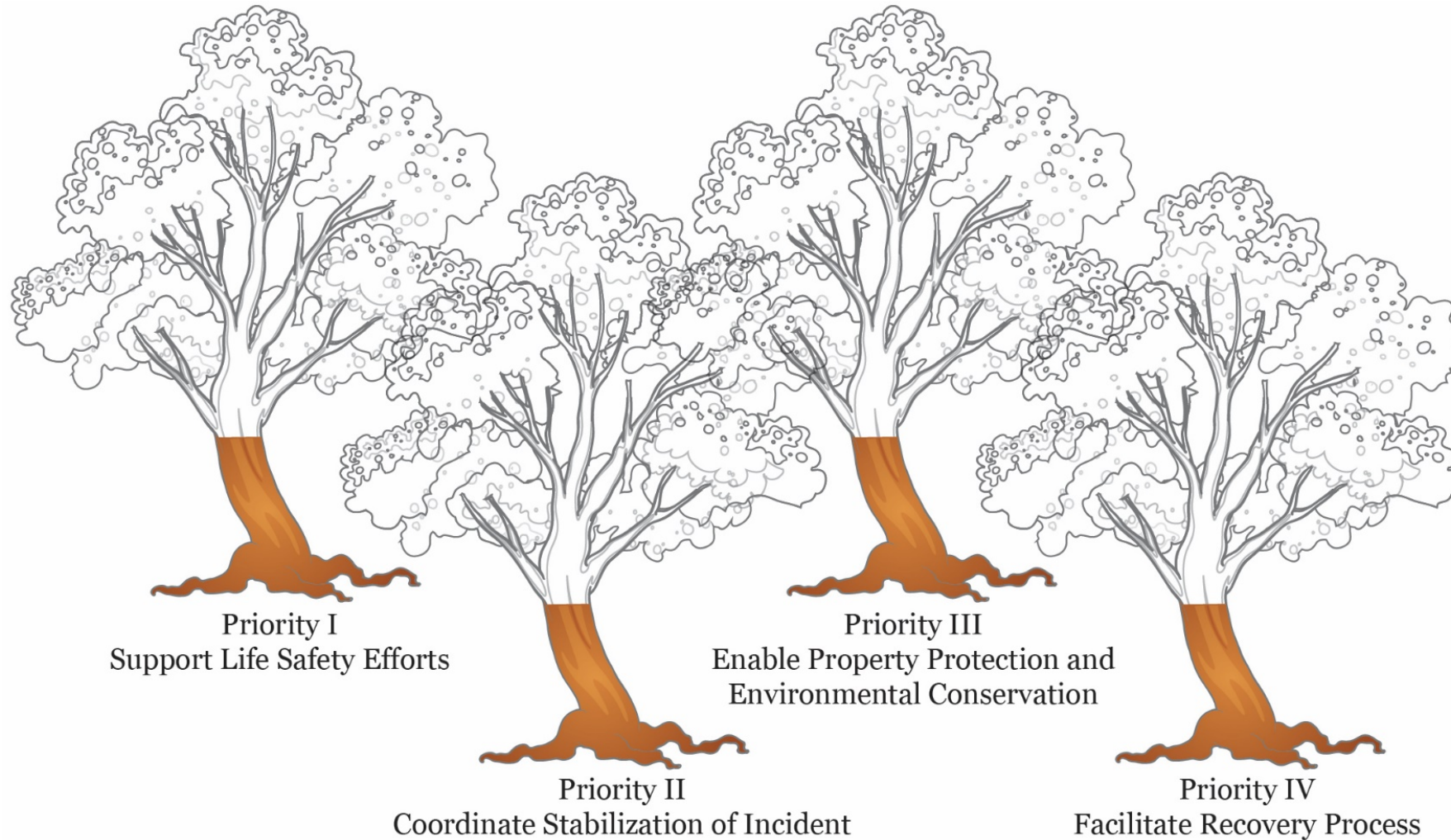
**Would you rather fight**

**1 horse-sized duck**

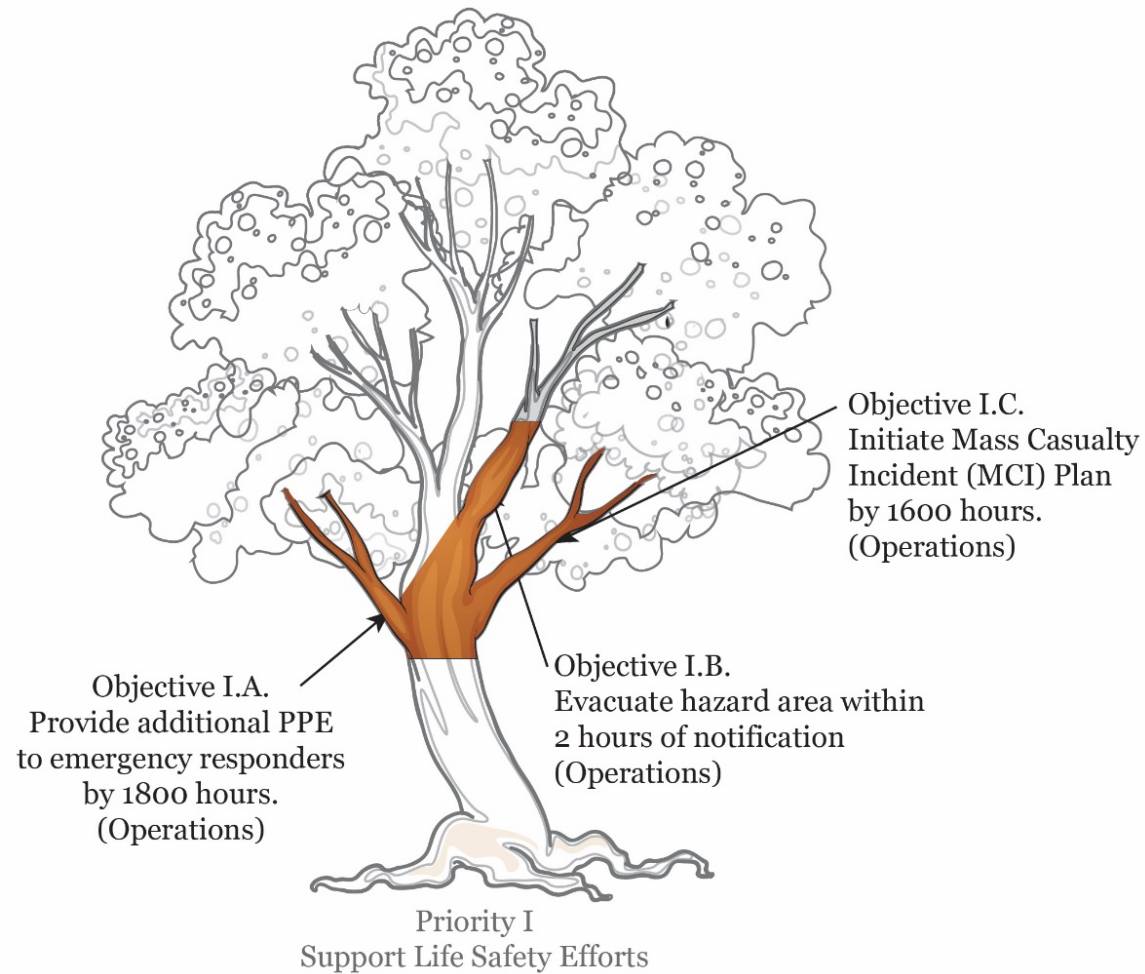
**OR**

**100 duck-sized horses?**

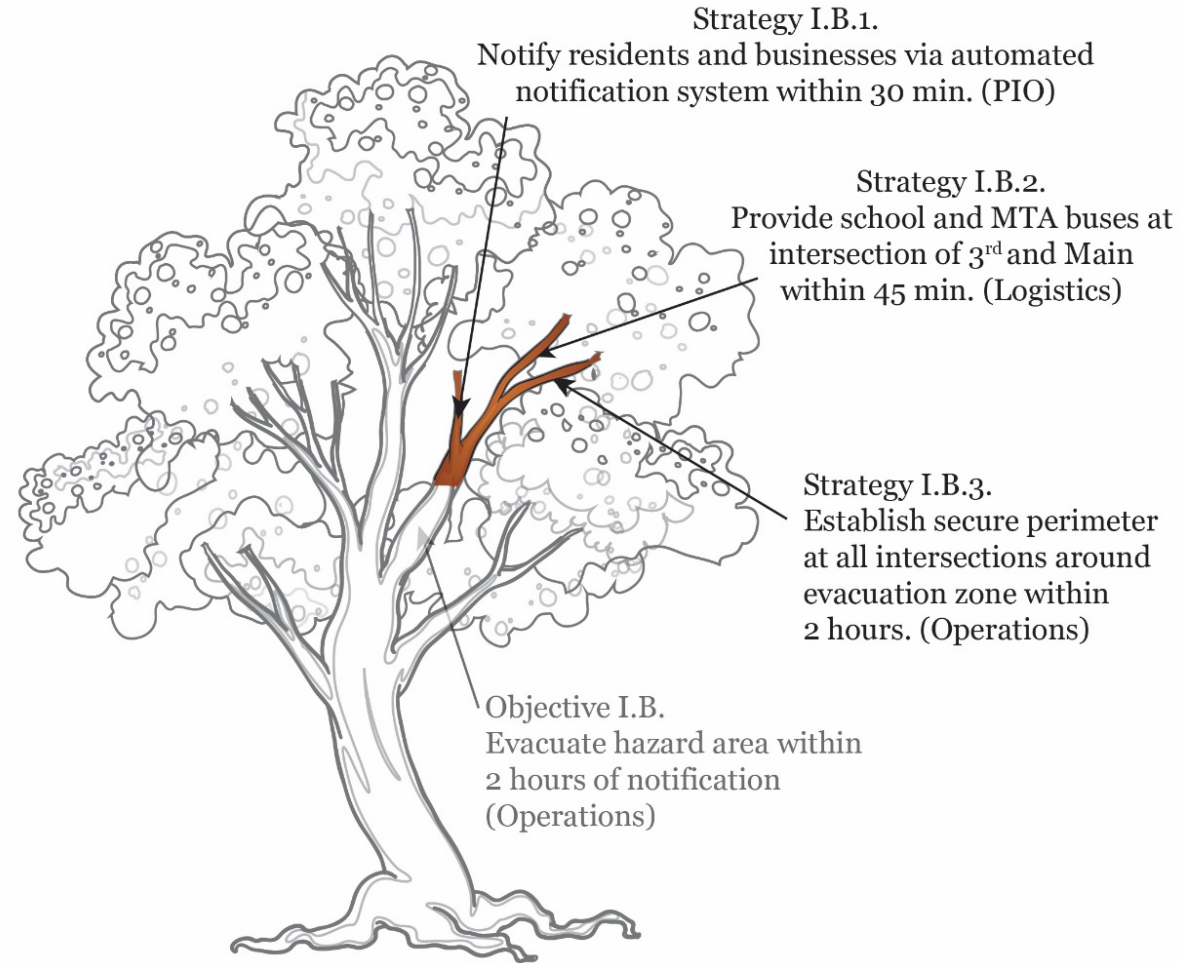
# Priorities, Objectives, Strategies, Tasks (P.O.S.T.)



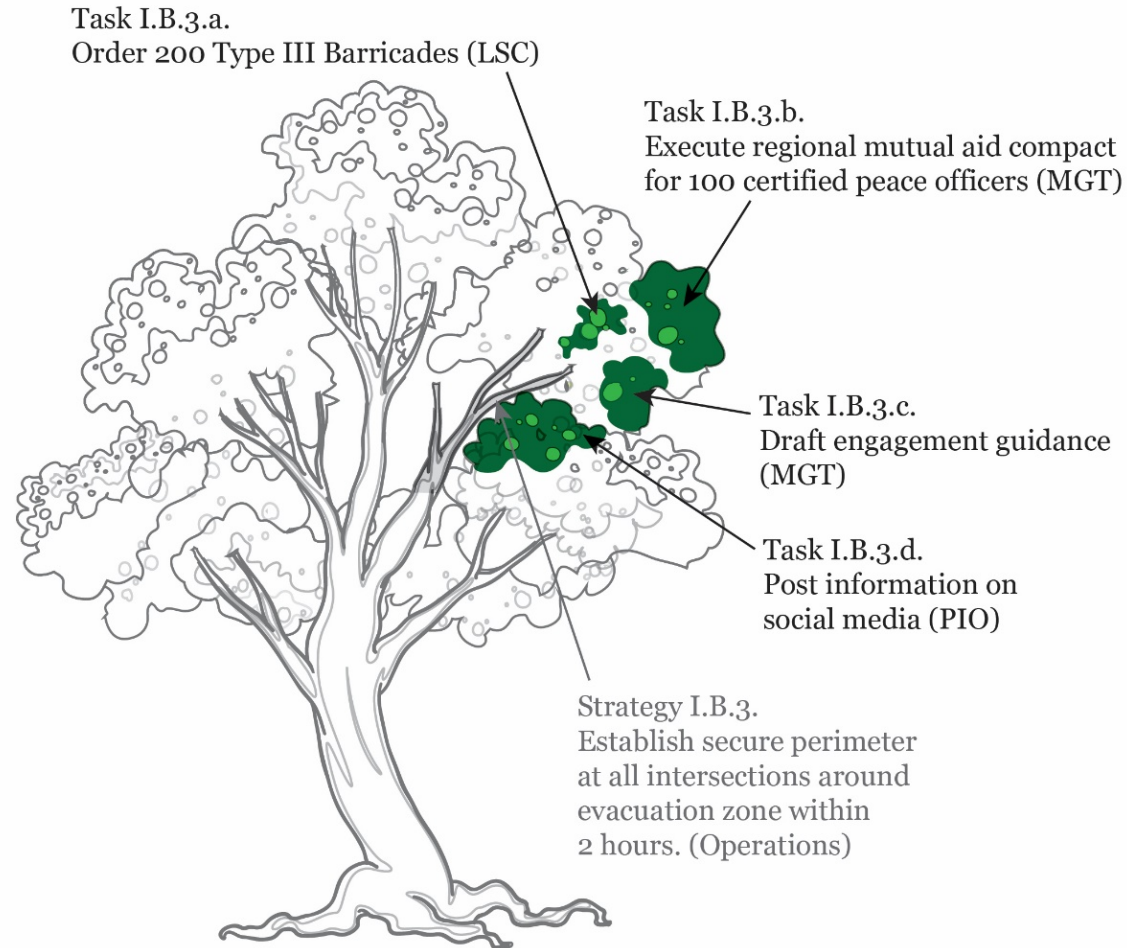
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# All Hazards Capabilities-Based Planning

“Planning, under uncertainty, to provide capabilities suitable for a wide range of modern-day challenges and circumstances while working within an economic framework that necessitates choice.”

## Emergency Support Functions (ESF)

- |                                     |                                   |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 1. Transportation                   | 9. Search and Rescue              |
| 2. Communication                    | 10. Hazardous Materials           |
| 3. Building/Grounds/Infrastructure  | 11. Pets                          |
| 4. Firefighting                     | 12. Energy/Utilities              |
| 5. Leadership/Command               | 13. Security and Law Enforcement  |
| 6. Food/Water and Shelter           | 14. Mitigation/Recovery/Insurance |
| 7. Resource/Logistics               | 15. Public Information/Media      |
| <b>8. Public Health and Medical</b> |                                   |



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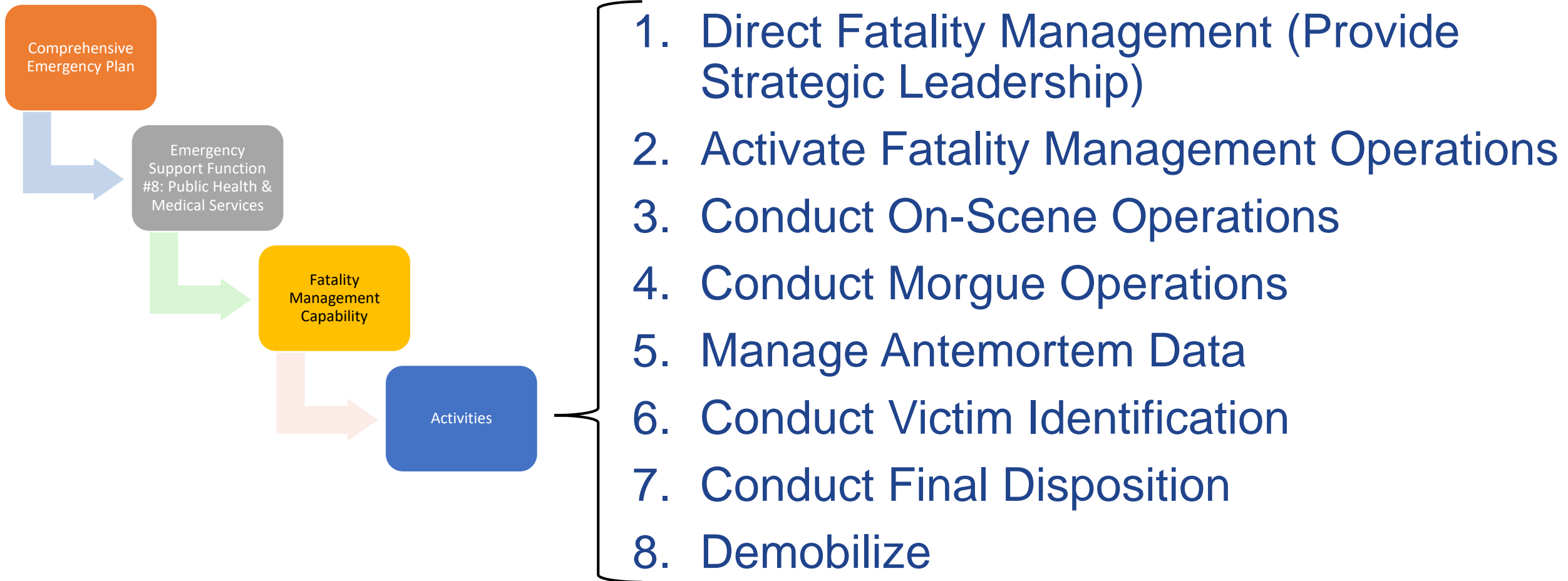
## ESF8 Capabilities

- Disaster Mental Health
- Environmental Health
- Epidemiological Surveillance & Investigation
- **Fatality Management**
- Isolation & Quarantine
- Laboratory Testing
- Mass Prophylaxis
- Medical Supplies Management & Distribution
- Medical Surge
- Responder Health & Safety
- Triage and Pre-Hospital Treatment

# Fatality Management Outcomes (Objectives)

- Complete recovery and documentation of human remains, personal effects, and items of evidence
- Remains receive surface decontamination
- Remains are examined and identified and released to next-of-kin's funeral home with a complete certified death certificate
- Reports of missing persons and ante mortem data are efficiently collected
- Victims' family members receive updated information prior to media release
- Hazmat regulations are reviewed and restrictions on transportation and disposition of remains are made clear
- Personal effects are made safe to return to next-of-kin
- Law Enforcement agencies are given all the information needed to investigate and prosecute the case successfully
- Families are provided incident specific support services

# Fatality Management Activities





- Upcoming slides are packed
- No need to take notes
- Meant to illustrate breadth of content
- For sample framework/outline...
  - A. Contact me (info on closing slide)
  - B. Leave me your card
  - C. Provide through your association?
  - D. Slides available for download

# Activity #1: Direct Fatality Management

**Description:** Direct all internal Fatality Management Operations, coordinating with other capabilities as needed.



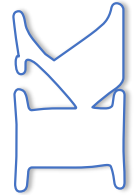
- Coordinate local, state, federal mortuary/morgue services
  - Request DMORT
  - Provide situation report
- Allocate surge morgue resources
- Coordinate state assistance for next-of-kin notification and collection of antemortem information
  - Request appropriate personnel (i.e. psychologists, social services)
  - Contact State for use of facilities
- Identify medico-legal authority
  - Brief legal requirements/limitations
- Coordinate with medical facility/IDPH or general medical community
  - Victim expired under medical care
  - Physician provided needed medicolegal authority to issue death certificate
- Identify key morgue staff
  - Supervisor, PIO, Safety Officer, Liaison Officer
- Identify ME/C staff for antemortem data collection in FAC
  - Trained skills and psychologically
  - Multiple shifts
- Coordinate regional and state assistance for victim identification and mortuary services, and the processing, preparation and disposition of remains
  - Request portable morgue
  - Available resources allocated by state/federal authorities

# Activity #2: Activate Fatality Management Operations

**Description:** Notify and mobilize appropriate personnel.



- Provide primary care physician with medico-legal authority
  - Personnel used for fatality surge
  - Brief responsibilities/parameters for death pronouncement



- Appropriate number of physicians provided medical legal authority based on incident needs



- Mobilize medical examiner or coroner
  - Activate medicolegal authority
  - Situation report provided



- Deploy portable morgue as appropriate
  - State or federal
  - Identify location



- Time to set up functional morgue facilities (e.g. portable morgue) from arrival on scene
- Determine morgue location
- Request activation of DMORT as appropriate
  - Identify geographic location for operations
  - Ready facility for operations
  - Resources and personnel ready to receive and/or retrieve human remains
- Time for surge resources and personnel to be operational
- Time for DMORT to arrive on-scene and set up

# Activity #3: Conduct On-Scene Operations

**Description:** Conduct scene evaluation, document, and remove fatalities from scene.



- Conduct scene survey for fatality management operations
  - Coordinate with tactical operations
  - Implement safety precautions for personnel
  - Develop plan to address fatalities
- Time to complete initial scene survey
- Document scene for fatality management operations
  - Map scene (GPS/Drone Flights)
  - Photograph remains prior to movement
- Gather forensic evidence for fatality management operations
  - Maintain chain of custody
  - Document evidence
  - Evidence gathering is coordinated with Law Enforcement
- Remove remains to staging
  - Handle human remains in a respectful manner
  - Ensure safety of personnel
  - Document remains
  - Ensure refrigeration adequate to needs
- Time for appropriate refrigerated units to arrive on-scene
- Transport remains from staging to morgue operations
  - Ensure safety of personnel and transporters
  - Handle human remains in a respectful manner
  - Track human remains

# Activity #4: Conduct Morgue Operations

**Description:** Conduct multi-specialty forensic analyses of human remains to determine the cause and manner of death.



- Implement morgue operations
  - Store remains in appropriate manner, as indicated by federal, state and local (FSL) guidelines
  - Ensure adequate number of ME personnel to support morgue of that size per FSL guidelines
  - Ensure adequate resources available for specific incident
- Receive remains at morgue
  - Track remains
  - Shelter remains from public view
- All remains tracked through morgue
- Decontaminate remains
  - Adhere to appropriate decontamination procedures as designated by FSL guidelines
  - Confirm complete decontamination
- Store human remains
  - Hold remains in appropriate environment to maintain preservation until autopsy can be performed (ME Office, offsite locations with appropriate power, water and sufficient evaluation room)
  - Ensure appropriate refrigeration provided as required by ME guidelines
  - Secure storage site
- Package personal effects found with remains for return to next of kin (if possible)
  - Track personnel effects
  - Decontaminate personal effects
  - Prepare documentation
- All personal effects tracked with appropriate set of remains
- Perform autopsies
  - Perform with respect for dead
  - Perform decontamination
  - Diagram findings
  - Assign body tracker to remains throughout process

# Activity #5: Manage Antemortem Data

**Description:** Integrate fatality management staff into the Family Assistance Center (FAC) for the purpose of interviewing families of the missing and dead to collect information useful for identification purposes.



- Activate antemortem data collection activities
  - Key staff on-scene
  - Provide staff counseling
  - Meet needs of victims and family of victims
- Activate communications systems for the general public to report missing persons
- Make public announcement of missing persons reporting
- Jurisdictional ME participate in the family reception center
- Establish antemortem record repository and its housing facility
  - Provide IT support
  - Ensure compatibility with other databases
  - Ensure database security
  - Backup electronic data
- Ready repository/library to receive antemortem victims records from establishment of FAC
- Conduct collection of antemortem information within the FAC
  - Interview family
  - Secure information from general access
  - Properly dispose of paper copies per FSL security guidelines
- Activate and staff the antemortem information collection process within the FAC
- Conduct DNA collection of family members
  - Take medical precautions
  - Show respect for grieving families
- Enter data obtained in interviews into library
  - Maintain security of paper copies
  - Implement ergonomics implemented for data enterers
  - Perform QA/QC during data entry
- Implement a balanced approach to address the needs of victims versus those families who have lost family members
  - Provide medical support
  - Provide religious counseling
  - Provide social services (mental health)

# Activity #6: Conduct Victim Identification

**Description:** Compile antemortem records of missing individuals and comparing those to the repository of postmortem data collected through On-Scene and Morgue Operations Activities.



- Compare data from morgue and FAC
  - Coordinate FAC and morgue
  - Ensure compatibility with other databases
- Ready antemortem and postmortem medical, dental, and fatality management databases to receive records from establishment of FAC
- Conduct DNA analysis
  - Conduct DNA tracking
  - Offer training
  - Protect samples from cross contamination
- Conduct fingerprint/palm print or footprint analysis
  - Note level of accuracy for each
  - Information sharing across appropriate agencies
- Check with FSL or international databases
  - Grant or utilize access to databases
  - Enforce security (IT and physical)
- Identify remains
  - Notify law enforcement and Incident Commander
- Identify all recovered remains

# Activity #7: Conduct Final Disposition

**Description:** Return the human remains and personal effects to the families or designated legal authority (i.e., ME/C, Sheriff) for final disposition following recovery, decontamination, determination of the cause and manner of death and positive identification.



- Issue death certificate
  - Process documentation in accordance with local guidelines
  - Address when no remains are identified
- Notify next-of-kin
  - Coordinate notifying authority with religious/social services
  - Make notification in privacy
  - Compassion shown by notifying authority
- Release remains to legally authorized person(s) or local authorities if no legally authorized person(s) are identified
  - Coordinate with funeral directors
  - Discuss restrictions on remains
  - Observe privacy of family
- Return effects to legally authorized person(s)
  - Discuss restrictions on effects
  - Observe privacy of family
  - Confirm ownership prior to return of item(s)

# Activity #8: Demobilize


**Description:** Return all fatality management assets and resources to pre-incident readiness levels.



- Reconstitute Fatality Management personnel and equipment
  - Identify meeting point(s) to conduct final personnel accountability procedures
  - Retrieve equipment
  - Inventory equipment and document losses
  - Reorder irretrievable equipment
- Fatality management personnel participate in operational debriefing
  - Document issues and accomplishments of mission
  - Identify lessons observed and monitor progress until they become lessons learned
  - Explain plan to personnel to return to prior readiness state
  - Provide contact information on resources to assist with administrative, financial, and medical matters
- All fatality management personnel should participate in operational review
- Identify fatality management staff post-operational needs
  - Provide psychological first aid and a voluntary basis
  - Implement ongoing psychological needs plan

# SUMMARY



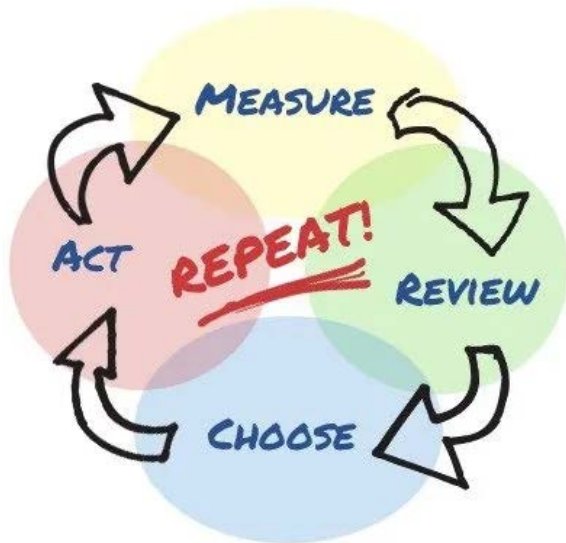
- 
1. Scale matters
  2. Risk exists everywhere
  3. Capability and capacity must expand as needed

key  
takeaways



**What  
would  
YOU  
Do**





- Confirm relationships with local emergency management, funeral homes, hospitals, etc.
- Validate the community's current capabilities and resources (capabilities assessment)
- Engage in collaborative planning for mass fatality incidents (clarify expectations)
- Create mutual aid agreements, explore compacts, and other methods to access and expand resources
- Conduct tabletop, functional and full-scale exercises to validate plans, training and resources
- Feedback loop begins again and runs at a regular interval

# Thank YOU for What YOU do

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