

## Annexure 3:

### Summary of Emergency Responders

Source: INTERPOL DVI Guide

## ***Annexure 3: Summary of Emergency Responders***

### **3.1. Emergency Responders**

There are many specialist agencies involved in a disaster response and it is therefore important to acknowledge and appreciate that each has a very important function and area of responsibility. DVI forms part of that emergency response and to ensure that DVI management effectively maximises the expertise, advice and available resources from such contributing agencies, effective structures, plans and liaison arrangements need to be created and implemented.

In terms of the specialist response agencies that are likely to attend the disaster site, they are initially confined to police, fire and ambulance. However, as additional resources are engaged, the following specialist services are likely to attend and operate in conjunction with DVI teams:

- Emergency response specialists (e.g. Police, Fire, Ambulance).
- Rescue Units (e.g. Search and Rescue).
- Investigation units (e.g. Crime and Fire investigators).
- Forensic Services (e.g. Scene examiners).
- Disaster Investigation Unit (e.g. Air Safety).
- Intelligence Unit.
- Public Information Unit (e.g. Media).

The major functions that some of the initial responders perform are summarised under the following headings.

#### ***3.1.1. Emergency Rescue Units***

Initial reports to emergency rescue units rarely provide accurate detailed information or a clear indication of the scope of the disaster, including the number of victims. Therefore, emergency rescue units should obtain an overview of the actual situation in cooperation with other responders at the site and then initiate the following measures:

- Rescue and immediate medical treatment of survivors.
- Identification and recognition of all medical personnel.
- Establishment of emergency stand-by readiness at local hospitals (crisis plans).
- Establishment of a first-aid station/field hospital staffed with physicians and medical assistants as a transit station for all survivors as needed (Survivor Reception Centre).
- Determination of hospital admission capacities; coordination of the transportation of injured victims from the disaster site.
- Establishment of provisional medical treatment stations in the vicinity of the disaster site as needed. Determination of the number of victims having left the site in shock, panic, or for some other reason.
- Provision of information to injured victim collection points, hospitals and outpatient clinics.
- Preparation of documentation on the number, condition and identities of injured persons (this forms the baseline for continuous reporting to the disaster operation command).
- Recognition of change from rescue priority to investigation and DVI priority when all survivors have been removed from the disaster site.
- Recording of any disturbance of human remains during rescue operations, including listing names of rescue staff responsible for such disturbance, maintenance of personal effects and other potentially identifying evidence with remains and notation of persons certifying death.
- Preparation of the list of missing persons requires knowledge of the destination of all survivors who have been removed.

### 3.2. Investigation Units

In order to ensure that the disaster site is preserved and controlled to enable the commencement of investigations, the following functions and responsibilities need to be observed:

- Containment of the disaster site/area - as complete security is essential in order to ensure optimum progress of emergency rescue operations, to protect evidence and the public.
- Ensuring safety prior to access to the disaster site.
- Securing the disaster site to prevent access by unauthorized persons (fences, barriers, if necessary guards).
- Removal of individuals without need or authorization to be present at the disaster site.
- Preparation of a survey of the disaster site/area as needed (GPS, laser survey, photographic documentation, photogram-metric survey).
- Procurement of wide-area photographs, maps and/or layouts of the disaster site (numbered building floor plans).
- Preparation of grids for outdoor disasters (aircraft crashes, railroad accidents and similar), in order to ensure more complete and effective processing of the resulting sectors. The arrangement of sectors in a chessboard pattern will substantially facilitate the subsequent search for evidence and recovery of bodies and body parts.
- Establishment of controlled common approach paths with specific entrance and exit points wherever possible. Conducting and recording identity checks and times of individuals entering or exiting at these points.
- Assignment of specific responsibilities to civilian volunteers as appropriate with safety/risk assessments having been conducted.
- Procurement of personal contact information from possible witnesses.
- Establishment of transport control stations, parking areas, entry and exit routes, helicopter landing pads, etc.

### 3.3. Disaster Investigation Units

The investigation into the cause of a disaster is one of the last critical functions in the disaster response operation. This follows the completion of evidence collection and scene-of-crime work, emergency rescue measures and the identification of victims.

As a general rule, the nature of the disaster will usually dictate the types of specialists that need to be engaged to assist in the investigation process. Examples of the types of specialists required include:

- Air crash investigators for plane crashes.
- Post-blast experts for explosive related terrorist attacks.
- Ballistic experts for mass shooting incidents.
- Medical and / or forensic experts for chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear related incidents.

Importantly, it should be remembered that the investigation into the cause of a disaster is an official and usually statutory responsibility. The findings of the investigation will not normally have a direct impact on the overall disaster response process, but the outcome may have an influence on:

- potential criminal prosecutions.
- conclusions and recommendations made during a coronial inquest.
- how agencies go about preventing and responding to similar incidents in the future.