

A County Coroner's Role In Fatality Management Planning and Response

**Satellite Conference and Live Webcast
Thursday, July 9, 2009
10:00-11:30 a.m. Central Time**

Produced by the Alabama Department of Public Health
Video Communications and Distance Learning Division

Faculty

**Bill Harris
President
Alabama Coroners Association**

Recent Planning Efforts

- **2008**
 - Series of 11 Fatality Management (F/M) workshops throughout the state
- **Alabama Department of Public Health F/M template**
- **Annual Coroners Conference**
 - Upcoming projects (tool kit and webcast)

Why We Are Here Today

- **Planning**
 - Short term and long term
- **A need for each Coroner to seriously consider how a pandemic will affect their county and how they will respond**

Coroner Authority

- **Code of Alabama (1975) Act 15-4**
 - 15-4-2
 - **Examination of body and report by Coroner**

Lee County Could Expect

- **5 extra deaths per day for eight weeks for three waves**
- **761 deaths related to influenza in addition to deaths from other causes**

Deaths at Home

- Follow up and decedent pick up may not be timely
- Who will be available to pick up decedents?
- Where will decedents be taken if funeral homes are at capacity?

Collection Points

- Who will be responsible to run/operate?
- Issues
 - family/community education
 - cold storage or lack there of
 - decedent identification
 - decedent tracking
 - personal effects

Mass Burial Planning

- Trigger
- Location
- Security
- Interment and Disinterment
- Decedent tracking
- Identification

Coroner's Role During a Pandemic

- Change in role with increased death rate
- Reporting (to Coroner from outside agencies)
- Reporting (from Coroner to ADPH and other agencies)
- Expectation

Joint Effort With ADPH

- CoronerME
 - Software/laptops grant to standardize day to day operations
 - Data collection
 - Daily death counts during a pandemic
 - Other data elements (future applications)

Coroners Must

- Be involved with the local fatality management planning
- Review the local plan with other authorities
- Anticipate difficult questions
- Identify potential resources
- Collect and report requested data

Coroners Should Not

- **Fail to plan**
- **Plan alone**
- **Assume you can handle everything**
- **Assume the “government” will handle fatality management**

Questions?