

2013

WEST FERTILIZER PLANT I

Deployment Statistics

Lasted a total of 3 days

81 Personnel activated supporting the following resources:

- Type-I US&R Task Force
- 2 ESF-9 Coordinators
- ESF-9 Coordination Center

Type - **SEARCH OPERATIONS (NON-WATER)**



On the evening of April 17, 2013, a large fire occurred at the West Fertilizer plant in the city of West, Texas. Due to health concerns, a portion of the area was immediately evacuated. The fire resulted in a large explosion at the plant causing significant damage to homes and structures within a 1/2 mile of the fertilizer plant. The explosion was the equivalent of nearly 10 tons of TNT and registered as a 2.1 Magnitude on the Richter Scale. The on-duty TX-TF2 Type-III US&R Task Force was requested soon after the explosion at 10:00 p.m. and arrived on scene at 2:00 a.m. to begin searching for survivors.

TX-TF1 received orders from TDEM around 11:00 p.m. for technical personnel to assess the damage caused by the explosion. Just a few hours later at 3:00 a.m., the State of Texas ordered the activation of a TX-TF1 Type-I US&R Task Force and 2 Human Remains (HR) canine teams. Upon arriving in the city of West, TX-TF1 conducted wide area searches south and southeast of the explosion site, clearing nearly 200 homes. TX-TF1 and TX-TF2 then coordinated shoring and delayering of an apartment complex that had obtained severe damage from the blast.

On the second day, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives (ATF) and the Texas Fire Marshall's Office cleared the blast crater for operations, and TX-TF1 worked to search the fertilizer plant and the crater for missing persons and the fire fighters who lost their lives fighting the plant fire before the explosion. Because of the large number of hazardous materials present, the canines were unable to operate in the crater, so TX-TF1 had to conduct the technical search without the aid of the canine teams.

The 2 teams successfully completed their mission several days later, with TX-TF2 demobilizing on April 19 and TX-TF1 demobilizing on the morning of April 20.



April 18-20