

TASK FORCE SUPPORTS FEMA IST DEPLOYMENT FOR HURRICANE KATRINA



On August 26th, 2005, in preparations for Hurricane Katrina, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) activated forward deployed TX-TF1 and five additional FEMA US&R teams. In order to support such a large National US&R deployment, FEMA activated the Blue and Red FEMA Incident Support Teams (IST's) and requested that TX-TF1 personnel assist with staffing. One TX-TF1 task force member was requested by FEMA to forward deploy to the Blue IST basing location which was pre-staged in Shreveport, Louisiana. The Red FEMA IST was staged in Meridian, Mississippi. After the hurricane made landfall, the Blue IST established a base camp in the parking lot of a big box retailer in Jefferson Parish and then moved to a permanent location at Zephyr Field near New Orleans. Shortly after landfall on August 29th, the IST's began planning operations for the deployed US&R task forces. By the morning of August 30th, eight additional task forces were activated and enroute to Mississippi and Louisiana. On August 31st, ten additional task forces were activated. At this point, Hurricane Katrina was the first complete mobilization of the entire National US&R System.



Hurricane Katrina was the most destructive storm to strike the United States. Both IST's were directing search and rescue operations in Alabama, Mississippi and Louisiana. The IST serves to interact with local and state officials requesting federal search and rescue assistance. The IST is the key link between the deployed US&R task forces and the local incident commanders and FEMA Headquarters. The IST has a robust planning component that provides seamless information and incident data to federal search and rescue responders.

TX-TF1 provides personnel to staff the FEMA US&R IST for deployment throughout the United States upon activation by FEMA. Supporting the mobilization and deployment of the FEMA IST provides task force personnel an opportunity to train and practice command and planning functions at large scale incidents and improves the State's capability for disaster response and mitigation. The multi-disciplinary FEMA US&R task forces afford search, rescue, medical, and technical capabilities, and a wide variety of services for catastrophic events.

The FEMA IST Deployment for Hurricane Katrina was the most challenging in the history of the program. By August 27th, the FEMA IST's were providing planning and support for twenty eight FEMA US&R Teams conducting operations over a three state area. Hurricane Katrina was the first time the entire National US&R System was fully activated and deployed for a single incident.

Deployment Statistics

• Incident involved 1 person deployed for 13 days

FEMA Incident Support Team

- 1 Task force member deployed as the Point of Arrival/
Mobilization Specialist

