

# 2003

## SPACE SHUTTLE COLUMBIA

### Deployment Statistics

Lasted a total of 9 days

40 Personnel activated supporting the following resources:

- 10 Search Team personnel
- 12 Canine Search teams
- 6 Medical personnel and equipment
- 6 Logistics personnel and equipment

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



During the launch of the Space Shuttle Columbia on February 1, 2003, a piece of foam insulation broke off from the external tank on the shuttle and struck the left wing of the orbiter causing minor damage. The minor damage became major damage during re-entry into the Earth's atmosphere, where hot atmospheric gases penetrated and destroyed the internal wing structure, causing the Space Shuttle to become unstable and break apart, killing the 7 astronauts on board. Debris from Columbia fell in the southwestern counties of Arkansas to Louisiana, and all the way west into Texas, with the largest amount of debris being found in East Texas over a field of nearly 2,000 square miles.

On February 3, 2003, TX-TF1 was activated and selected to coordinate canine search teams to assist with search and recovery of the remains of the astronauts and debris from the shuttle. The 8 person leadership team was deployed and based out of the command and control center in Lufkin, TX. This team supported and assisted in the coordination of the search and recovery operations with the total number of task force personnel involved growing to 40 members over the next few days.

This deployment was the first time the task force deployed with a Human Remains (HR) canine capability, and over the time frame of 9 days, the team was able to successfully help locate the remains of the 7 astronauts and assist with the location of nearly 40% of the Space Shuttle Columbia.

All resources were demobilized on February 11, after the largest mobilization of search and rescue assets in the state's history.



February 3-11