
1. INTRODUCTION

A. DIFFERENT APPROACHES TO MASS CASUALTY INCIDENTS

1. Basic Approach

A “scoop and run” method is used most commonly to deal with accident victims. This approach does not require specific technical ability from the rescuers. While this method can be justified for the management of small numbers of victims in certain circumstances (e.g., when an accident occurs in the immediate proximity of available emergency care services), the same approach in a mass casualty situation will result in the transfer of the problem from the incident site to the hospital, overwhelming and disrupting the care capacity of the health facility.

2. Classical Care Approach

In the “classical care approach”, first responders are trained to provide victims with basic triage and field care before evacuation to the nearest available receiving health care facility.

This approach juxtaposes two organizations which are working independently with only weak linkages:

- *The field organization* (often involving non-health sector responders), and
- *The receiving health care organization* that is often totally divorced from the pre-hospital problem.

In a mass casualty situation, this approach will quickly result in chaos.

3. Mass Casualty Management Approach

Mass casualty management, the most sophisticated approach, includes pre-established procedures for resource mobilization, field management and hospital reception. It is based on specific training of various level of responders and incorporates links between field and health care facilities through a command post. It acknowledges the need for a multi-sectoral response for triage, field stabilization and evacuation to adapted health care facilities. The development of this approach was based on the availability of large amounts of human and material resources (“adequate manpower and equipment”).

Attempting to replicate this approach in a country with limited resources does not result in the expected level of effectiveness. In such situations, the mass casualty management approach should be adapted with special attention given to a country’s specific situational problems.

B. PROBLEMS IN DEVELOPING MASS CASUALTY MANAGEMENT

1. Limited Human Resources

Due to a shortage of human resources, a country will experience difficulties in developing, training and maintaining specialized personnel. Since staff are fully occupied with daily routine tasks, it will be difficult to develop a mass casualty management ap-

proach with staff exclusively reserved for emergency management. These countries, therefore, must either persist at a lower level of organization or they are forced to "import" a non-adapted organization.

2. Limited Material Resources

- 1) One secondary/tertiary hospital for an area
- 2) Minimal transport resources (ambulances)
- 3) Lack of radiocommunications

The three conditions listed above will prevent a smooth and well-coordinated dispatch of victims of a mass casualty incident to various health care facilities. Rescuers will be obliged to carry all victims to the only care facility available, which may overwhelm the health care system.

3. Poor Communications

Topography

Access to a mass casualty incident site will be hindered by difficult topography. Road evacuation of victims is difficult in mountainous areas, particularly in developing countries. This delays the arrival of the victims to the care facilities. Moreover, the transportation of patients under difficult conditions will have a negative impact on the patients' status.

Certain types of topography will also result in problems with radio-communication, a basic requirement for the organization of rescue.

Isolation

External assistance will have difficulty reaching isolated areas. This isolation can be permanent (for example in the case of islands, remote mountain areas, or forest

settlements) or temporary (after floods, landslides, snow, or bridge collapse).

The disaster response plan in these areas must take into consideration the fact that they can stay isolated for extended periods. This dimension must be included in any mass casualty approach.

C. OBJECTIVES OF THIS MANUAL

"Specific problems require specific solutions" is an understatement. When resources are limited, as outlined above, it is necessary to develop a mass casualty management approach that encompasses the limitations imposed by actual circumstances. The organization implemented must allow an effective transition from good daily rescue and care procedures to mass casualty management, maximizing the use of limited existing resources. The development of such a set of connected parts functioning together for a particular goal will constitute a Mass Casualty Management System.

The objective of this manual is to provide the necessary guidelines to assist senior emergency personnel in establishing a Mass Casualty Management System based on:

- Good daily emergency services
 - Good daily coordination procedures
 - Fast and efficient transition from routine procedures to mass casualty management
 - Well-established mass casualty management procedures
-