



**NTSB**

# Federal Family Assistance Framework for Rail Passenger Disasters

Prepared by—  
The National Transportation Safety Board  
Transportation Disaster Assistance Division  
Revised 2025

Disclaimer: Individuals using this document are encouraged to refer to the most recent Rail Passenger Disaster Family Assistance Act legislation at [49 U.S.C. § 1139](#) and [49 U.S.C. 24316](#).

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## Acronyms, Initialisms, and Abbreviations

Acronym, Initialism, or Abbreviation	Expanded Term
<b>ADA</b>	Americans with Disabilities Act
<b>AFDIL</b>	Armed Forces DNA Identification Laboratory
<b>AFMES</b>	Armed Forces Medical Examiner System
<b>CFR</b>	<i>Code of Federal Regulations</i>
<b>CGA</b>	crew gathering area
<b>DHHS</b>	Department of Health and Human Services
<b>DHS</b>	Department of Homeland Security
<b>DMORT</b>	Disaster Mortuary Operational Response Team
<b>DOD</b>	Department of Defense
<b>DOJ</b>	Department of Justice
<b>DOS</b>	Department of State
<b>DOT</b>	US Department of Transportation
<b>DPMU</b>	Disaster Portable Morgue Unit
<b>EMS</b>	emergency medical services
<b>EOC</b>	emergency operations center
<b>ESF-8</b>	Emergency Support Function-8
<b>FAC</b>	Family Assistance Center
<b>FBI</b>	Federal Bureau of Investigation
<b>FBI ERT</b>	FBI Evidence Response Team
<b>FBI VSD</b>	FBI Victim Services Division
<b>FEMA</b>	Federal Emergency Management Agency
<b>FPS</b>	Federal Protective Service
<b>FRC</b>	friends and relatives center
<b>FST</b>	family support task
<b>HIPAA</b>	Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act
<b>JFSOC</b>	Joint Family Support Operations Center
<b>MCI</b>	mass casualty incident
<b>MOA</b>	memorandum of agreement
<b>MOU</b>	memorandum of understanding
<b>MPCC</b>	missing persons call center
<b>NDMS</b>	National Disaster Medical System
<b>NOK</b>	next of kin
<b>NTSB</b>	National Transportation Safety Board
<b>OEM</b>	office of emergency management
<b>PE</b>	personal effects
<b>PGA</b>	passenger gathering area
<b>POC</b>	point of contact

<b>RC</b>	reunification center
<b>RIC</b>	remote information center
<b>ROC</b>	NTSB Response Operations Center
<b>RPDFAA</b>	Rail Passenger Disaster Family Assistance Act
<b>SMS</b>	short message system
<b>TDA</b>	NTSB Transportation Disaster Assistance Division
<b>TTY</b>	Teletypewriter
<b>US</b>	United States
<b>U.S.C.</b>	<i>United States Code</i>
<b>VIC</b>	victim information center
<b>VST</b>	victim support tasks

## Legislative Background and History of the National Transportation Safety Board Family Assistance Program

### Family Members Speak:

#### Family member 1

*When my parents' train derailed, nobody from [carrier name redacted] contacted us. My sister saw the news report around 9 a.m. and we had to find out for ourselves, what happened to our parents. The coroner did contact us regarding my father, sometime around 12 noon. But it was our efforts combined with luck and a concerned social work intern at [hospital name redacted] that had us locate our mother sometime around 6 p.m. It was not until sometime during the day on August 2, that a liaison from [carrier name redacted] approached us in the hospital.*

#### Family member 2

*Immediately after the crash, my family and I were looking for answers to all sorts of questions. What do we do now? What comes next? What happens down the road? Who can we turn to for answers? Of course, the first people we wanted answers from was [the airline]. Why? How? What happened to cause this? They had no answers, and even if they had, I realized it wasn't very likely they would tell us.<sup>1</sup>*

#### Family member 3

*I decided to try to call the 800 number on the screen. I tried for two hours - it was busy. I called the airport directly, but no one would give me information. Then finally around 10:30 I got through [to] the number. I was told all information on the flight had been pulled from the computer—that they would get back to me as soon as the passenger list was released. They took my name and number and told me they would call me back. Around 1:00 a.m. I received a call from (the airline) my husband has been confirmed to be on the flight...and there had been no survivors. No, "I'm sorry," just a frank answer.<sup>2</sup>*

### Former Chairman of NTSB speaks:

#### US House Subcommittee on Aviation Testimony

*The family members of that accident [ValuJet 592] and almost every tragic transportation accident I have mentioned are US taxpayers and our fellow human beings.*

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<sup>1</sup> [Final Report from the Task Force on Assistance to Families of Aviation Disasters](#)

<sup>2</sup> [Final Report from the Task Force on Assistance to Families of Aviation Disasters](#)

*They pay my salary, and they pay for the investigative work of the NTSB. Within reason and within the resources available to us, I believe we must be responsive. It is the right thing to do.*

*As I attended their memorial services and met with their families, I recommitted myself to ensuring that all family members of these tragic events are treated with respect with compassion, and with truth.*

Jim Hall, NTSB Chairman  
(June 19, 1996)

## Rail Passenger Disaster Family Assistance Act

In 2008, Congress enacted the Rail Safety Improvement Act (RSIA), P.L. 110-432, Div. A, 122 Stat. 4848. Title V of the RSIA creates a system for assisting families of passengers in a “rail passenger accident,” defined as *a rail passenger disaster that results in any loss of life and occurs in the provision of interstate intercity rail passenger operations or interstate or intrastate highspeed rail operations*. The legislation does not apply to commuter rail passenger transportation nor to tourist, historic, scenic, or excursion rail carriers.

Section 501 of the RSIA (codified at [Title 49 United States Code \[U.S.C.\] §1139](#)) establishes specific responsibilities of the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) and the independent nonprofit organization designated by the Board to coordinate emotional care, psychological care, and family support services of passengers involved in a rail passenger accident and the families of such passengers. The NTSB is responsible for coordinating federal government resources to support local and state governments, disaster relief organizations, and the rail passenger carrier to meet the needs of rail passenger accident victims and their families. Specifically, the NTSB has primary federal responsibility for facilitating the recovery and identification of fatally injured passengers and for communicating with passengers and passengers’ families about the roles of the rail passenger carrier, government agencies, and the independent nonprofit organization designated by the Board to support passengers and passengers’ families. Further, the NTSB is responsible for providing information to passengers and the families of passengers regarding the NTSB’s investigative process, and to the maximum extent practicable, ensure that the passengers and families of passengers are briefed regarding investigative findings prior to any public release of the information. The NTSB has established the Transportation Disaster Assistance Division (TDA) to meet the requirements specified in the legislation. The designated organization, specifically the American Red Cross (ARC), is responsible for contacting the passengers’ families to— in coordination with the rail passenger carrier— provide emotional care, psychological care, family support services and create an environment in which families may grieve in private.

Section 502 of the RSIA (codified at [Title 49 United States Code \[U.S.C.\] §24316](#)) requires rail passenger carriers to submit plans for addressing the needs of families of passengers involved in rail passenger accidents. In its plan, a rail passenger carrier must address eleven (11) aspects of disaster family assistance. The rail passenger carrier is

primarily responsible for notifying the families of the passengers that an accident has occurred, providing the passenger list upon request (based on the best available information at the time of the request) to the NTSB, US Department of Transportation (DOT), and the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), managing personal effects under their control, coordinating with the designated organization, and providing adequate training to the employees and agents of the carrier to meet the needs of survivors and family members following an accident. Rail passenger carriers are required to submit their plan for addressing the 11 assurances to the NTSB, DOT, and DHS; however, neither 49 U.S.C. §1139 nor §24316 requires that the NTSB, DOT, or DHS review or approve the plan. Further, the NTSB is not a regulatory agency and has no enforcement authority over rail passenger carriers regarding the provisions of the family assistance legislation.

Shortly after the Rail Safety Improvement Act was enacted, a Task Force was established to meet the series of requirements specified in 49 U.S.C. §1139. The task force was charged with developing a "model plan" and a series of recommendations to assist rail passenger carriers in responding to accidents that meet the criteria established by the legislation. The "model plan" ultimately became the NTSB Federal Family Assistance Plan for Rail Passenger Accidents.

The NTSB Federal Family Assistance Plan for Rail Passenger Accidents organizes the family assistance response framework and establishes guidance to facilitate an effective family assistance response. In 2025, the NTSB Federal Family Assistance Plan for Rail Passenger Accidents was revised, updated, and titled the Federal Family Assistance Framework for Rail Passenger Disasters. The new document pivots focus on the four fundamental concerns of family members with an emphasis on inter-agency coordination. The Framework provides information and suggestions to the family assistance response community, with a specific focus on roles and responsibilities of the NTSB, the American Red Cross, rail passenger carriers that hold obligations under 49 U.S.C. §24316 and §1139, and federal agencies that have established relationships with the NTSB.

The change from a plan to a framework reflects lessons learned from real-life deployments. Those lessons have led to the change from Victim Support Tasks (VSTs) to [Family Support Tasks](#) (FSTs) and includes the addition of terms, functions, and new support tasks. It is important to note that the Framework is not legislation, and carriers are not required to make changes to their response plans in response to the Framework; however, we encourage carriers to consider how their plans align with the principles

conveyed by the Framework. See [Appendix 1 – Federal Family Assistance Legislation](#) for the full text of the federal legislation.

When does the law apply?

The Act applies to rail passenger train accidents occurring during the provision of interstate intercity rail passenger transportation; or high-speed rail transportation, regardless of its cause or suspected cause, involving a carrier, for which the NTSB is the lead investigative agency, and that results in any loss of life.<sup>3</sup>

Who is Considered a Passenger?

A passenger is defined by The Act as “an employee of a rail passenger carrier aboard a train; any other person aboard the train without regard to whether the person paid for the transportation, occupied a seat, or held a reservation for the rail transportation; and any other person injured or killed in a rail passenger accident, as determined appropriate by the Board.”<sup>4</sup>

Who is Considered a Family Member of a Passenger?

The NTSB encourages a broad and inclusive definition of the term “family member” for the purposes of family assistance, acknowledging that many individuals may be considered family. Federal family assistance legislation does not provide a specific definition for the terms “family” or “family member.” It is important to note, however, that specific legal definitions may apply and may be highly relevant to other organizations or agencies involved in the response to a rail passenger train disaster (for example, the presiding medicolegal jurisdiction may be concerned with identifying the legal next of kin [NOK] of a decedent to direct their engagement). As such, it may be important to refer to state, federal, or tribal law to determine appropriate definitions for specific family members and be cognizant of their relevance.

For the purposes of this framework, the terms “survivor,” “families,” and “family members” refer to the various individuals or groups of individuals affected by a rail passenger train accident; this includes passengers who survive the accident, and those whose close association with a passenger (as defined above) may be considered equivalent to that of a family relationship, regardless of biological or legal connection. These may include immediate family, extended relatives, step, and half-siblings, caregivers, those living in the same residence, spouses, life partners, and friends.

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<sup>3</sup> [49 U.S.C. §1139](#)

<sup>4</sup> [49 U.S.C. §1139\(h\)\(3\)](#)

Anyone providing family assistance should be prepared to provide support to and work with all such persons, recognizing and accepting a variety of relational definitions and family dynamics.

## Legislated Roles and Responsibilities

### The Role of the NTSB

As codified in 49 U.S.C. §1139, the NTSB is responsible for coordinating federal government resources to support local, state, and tribal governments, disaster relief organizations, and the carrier to meet the needs of passengers involved in an accident and families of such passengers. Specifically, the NTSB has primary federal responsibility for facilitating the recovery and identification of fatally injured passengers, designating an independent nonprofit organization to provide emotional care, psychological care, and family support services; and communicating with passengers' families about the roles of the carrier, government agencies, and the independent nonprofit organization. The NTSB is also responsible for providing information to passengers and families of passengers regarding the investigative process and, to the maximum extent practicable, ensuring that survivors and family members are briefed on investigative findings prior to any public release of the information. To meet each of the requirements specified in the legislation, the NTSB established the TDA Division.

#### Criminal Acts and the Federal Bureau of Investigation

Title 49 U.S.C. §1139 designates the NTSB to coordinate federal assistance in response to rail passenger accidents. Family assistance related responsibilities transfer to the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) if circumstances reasonably indicate that the crash may have been caused by an intentional criminal act. However, the NTSB shall assist the FBI to the maximum extent possible in assisting the families of passengers if the NTSB relinquishes investigative priority to the FBI.<sup>5</sup>

### The Role of the NTSB's Designated Organization (American Red Cross)

To assist the families of passengers, the NTSB is required to "designate an independent nonprofit organization, with experience in disaster and post-trauma communication with families" to "have the primary responsibility for coordinating the emotional care, psychological care, and family support services of passengers involved

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<sup>5</sup> [49 U.S.C. §1139](#) and [§1131\(2\)\(B\)](#)



in the accident.”<sup>6</sup> The NTSB designates the American Red Cross (Red Cross)<sup>7</sup> to meet the requirements of the legislation when an accident occurs.

As the designated organization, the Red Cross provides emotional care, psychological care, family support services and staffing. Title 49 U.S.C. §1139 directs the Red Cross to connect with the passengers and families of passengers, coordinate with the disaster response team of the carrier involved, provide an environment in which families or survivors may grieve in private,<sup>8</sup> maintain contact with them regularly thereafter, and support requests for suitable memorial services if necessary and in consultation with families.

### The Role of the Carrier

Title 49 U.S.C. §24316 requires carriers to submit a plan to the NTSB for addressing the needs of families of passengers involved in rail passenger accidents. In their plan, a carrier must address, at a minimum, eleven assurances focused on information-sharing, logistical support, and the provision of various services identified in the applicable legislation. Although 49 U.S.C. §1139, and §24316 do not require the NTSB to review or approve submitted plans, carriers are expected to meet their obligations under the legislation and to abide by their submitted plan. It is important to note that the NTSB is not a regulatory agency and that the Federal Railroad Administration is the enforcement authority over rail passenger carriers regarding their provision of family assistance in response to a rail passenger train accident involving their company. See [Appendix 2](#) for more guidance on rail passenger carrier plan submission.

## NTSB Federal Family Assistance Plan for Rail Passenger Disasters

Shortly after the Rail Passenger Disaster Family Assistance Act (RPDFAA) was enacted, a Task Force for assistance to families of rail passenger disasters was established to meet the requirements specified in 49 U.S.C. §1139, and §24316. The Task Force consisted of representatives from the Federal Railroad Administration, the NTSB, the US Department of State (DOS), the FBI, the US Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), the Red Cross, National Railroad Passenger Corporation (Amtrak), United Transportation Union,

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<sup>6</sup> [49 U.S.C. §1139](#)

<sup>7</sup> For the purposes of this document, Red Cross refers to the American Red Cross.

<sup>8</sup> [49 U.S.C. §1139](#)

the National Association Railroad Passengers, survivors, and family members. The group included people with diverse perspectives and experiences who provided invaluable insights based on their professional and personal experiences as well as the experiences of countless others who were affected by these tragedies. Their insights were consolidated into the *Final Report from the Task Force on Assistance to Families of Rail Passenger Disasters*,<sup>9</sup> which served as the foundation for the NTSB's Federal Family Assistance Plan for Rail Passenger Disasters.

The NTSB's Federal Plan established roles for the organizations and agencies responding to a rail passenger train accident that meets the requirements established under 49 U.S.C. §1139. Based on the best practices presented in the task force's final report, the Federal Plan established Victim Support Tasks (VSTs) specifically for the NTSB, the affected carrier(s), and the Red Cross to help each entity meet their legislated requirements. In addition, the Federal Plan outlined VSTs for federal response partners that, through memorandums of agreement (MOA) or understanding (MOU) with the NTSB, have offered to provide assets in support of a major rail passenger train accident.

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<sup>9</sup> <https://www.nts.gov/tda/TDADocuments/Rail-Task-Force-Final-Report-without-Plan.pdf>

## Summary of Major Changes

### From Plan to Framework

The Federal Framework has been revised to reflect the NTSB's pivot to focusing on the four fundamental concerns of family members and the [Family Support Tasks](#) (FSTs) that support the collaborative interagency response to those concerns. Carriers and response organizations are encouraged to utilize this framework to assist in the development of their family assistance plan while keeping in mind that it is not intended to be a checklist. Each organization or agency responding to a rail passenger train disaster must be aware of and understand applicable Federal requirements. In the planning process, each organization must determine their capabilities and resources and tailor their plan to meet the needs of survivors and family members while adhering to the requirements of applicable legislation. This document can assist organizations in identifying areas of potential collaboration among stakeholders. Each organization can incorporate these principles into their family assistance operations plan while staying aligned with their mission and response objectives and remain adaptable to the evolving family assistance landscape.

The Federal Framework's focus is on response partners that either have responsibilities specified under 49 U.S.C. §11139, §24316 or those federal agencies with whom the NTSB has established active memoranda of understanding (MOU) or agreement (MOA). As the central coordinating agency, the NTSB has identified operating principles, concepts, and structures to help organize and integrate response efforts across the various mission areas of the NTSB's response partners.

### Family Support Tasks

The term *VSTs* was replaced with the term *FSTs* to represent a broadening of the concept of operations to be more inclusive of those affected by an accident. Although many of the tasks from the Federal Plan remain unchanged, several new FSTs reflect changes in best practices since the development of the earlier document.

This revision outlines FSTs, specifically addressing the roles of the NTSB, the carrier, and the Red Cross as discussed in the legislation. Also included are FSTs for organizations and agencies that have established partnerships with the NTSB through an MOA or MOU to provide support to the federal family assistance operation. This revision outlines the tasks by categorizing them into four main groups related to the fundamental

concerns of family members, and then subcategorizing tasks and roles assigned to each of the following entities:





- NTSB
- Rail passenger carrier
- Red Cross
- DOS
- FBI
- DHHS
- Department of Defense (DOD)
- FEMA
- Federal Protective Service (FPS)

Incorporating the guidance established by the FSTs assists entities with addressing the needs of family members.

## The Fundamental Concerns of Families

Although each rail passenger train accident differs in size, scope, and complexity, family members of fatally injured passengers, survivors, and survivors' family members, share some common fundamental concerns. Each concern is broad in scope and is common to individuals who have experienced an unexpected loss or injury of a loved one, whether related to a rail passenger train accident or not. Since its inception in 1996, the NTSB TDA Division has responded to numerous transportation accidents and has developed a clearer understanding of these fundamental concerns and their importance in a family assistance operation. Although each accident response presents its own unique complexities, the four fundamental concerns listed below remain consistent and transcend cultural and socioeconomic diversity in the immediate aftermath of an accident.

**FIGURE 1.** The Four Fundamental Concerns of Families

<b>Notification of Involvement</b> 	<b><i>Was my loved one involved?</i></b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Initial notification of passenger involvement</li> <li>Immediate and factual information about the accident</li> </ul>
<b>Victim Accounting</b> 	<b><i>Where is my loved one?</i></b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Search and rescue efforts, tracking of injured transported to hospitals</li> <li>Search and recovery of fatalities</li> <li>Victim examination, identification, and repatriation process</li> </ul>
<b>Information and Resources</b> 	<b><i>Where can I get help?</i></b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Basic needs, financial, and logistic support</li> <li>Emotional, psychological, and spiritual care</li> <li>Investigative updates</li> </ul>
<b>Personal Effects</b> 	<b><i>Where are my loved one's belongings?</i></b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recovery, processing, and return of associated and unassociated personal items</li> </ul>

The Framework is organized around these four fundamental concerns. A section is dedicated to defining each fundamental concern, specifically addressing it through relevant FSTs, and identifying the responding organization's role in alignment with the concern. Additionally, this revision incorporates the four fundamental concerns into the response partner FST list.

## Response Partner Matrix

To assist in avoiding overlaps and identifying potential gaps in services provided by responding agencies, this document introduces a matrix to provide a perspective regarding primary and supporting organizations that may have related roles. The matrix underscores the significance of building collaborative partnerships among such entities, particularly in the planning and preparedness efforts of plan development, to ensure a coordinated response when plans are executed and to ensure that the needs of family members are appropriately addressed.

The Response Partner Matrix, below, provides a visual representation of the intersection of the fundamental concerns of families and the existence of a role in addressing such by the associated entity listed on the left. A "✓" in an intersecting cell in the matrix indicates the presence of an FST, related to a fundamental concern, for which

a particular organization has a role. As the matrix illustrates, several organizations have FSTs and overlapping roles. It is important for these organizations to work together to avoid a duplication of efforts when addressing each fundamental concern.

**FIGURE 2.** Response Partner Matrix

Associated Response Partners	 Notification of Involvement	 Victim Accounting	 Information and Resources	 Personal Effects
NTSB	✓	✓	✓	✓
Carrier	✓	✓	✓	✓
Red Cross			✓	
DOS	✓	✓	✓	✓
FBI		✓	✓	✓
DHHS		✓		✓
DOD		✓		
FEMA			✓	
FPS			✓	

## Coordination and Integration with Local Response Organizations

Coordination is essential when responding to rail passenger train accidents. Federal family assistance legislation does not specifically address the roles of local, state, tribal, or federal responding agencies or entities beyond the NTSB, the carrier, and the Red Cross. However, it is important that all responding entities coordinate and integrate within the existing local, state, tribal, and non-governmental agencies' emergency response operations to address the needs of family members. Local response agencies assume the same roles that they would for any mass casualty incident (MCI) or emergency event within their jurisdiction, utilizing local emergency operations plans, resources, and mutual aid coordination.

To avoid duplication of efforts and resources, collaboration is imperative during the planning and response phases for a successful family assistance operation. Local jurisdiction plans may include the establishment of temporary facilities and the deployment of resources to accommodate support to survivors and family members within their jurisdiction. The affected carrier may also have plans established for similar facilities to fulfill their legislated obligations for family assistance. The importance of pre-accident collaboration between local agencies and carriers during the planning phase cannot be overstated.

Although not required by legislation, consolidating support services into designated locations has been proven to be extremely beneficial. These facilities provide a structure within the response operation, ease the burden of information gathering and sharing, and provide for safe and secure methods for providing family assistance.

### Friends and Relatives Centers

The fundamental concerns of families who believe they have a loved one involved in an accident begin immediately. Family members will have many questions and will likely use a variety of methods to obtain support in finding answers. Often, this includes family members traveling to the location they might expect their loved one(s) to be (for example, departure and arrival stations, hospitals, or the accident scene, if known). Friends and Relatives Centers (FRCs) provide a location where family members may receive immediate assistance in obtaining initial information about the accident and their loved one's involvement. Temporary and minimal support services including basic needs, emotional support, and health services should be provided. See [Appendix 7 - Family Assistance Operations](#) for more information related to family assistance operations.

### Passenger Gathering Area

Survivors of an accident may require or desire assistance beyond initial life-safety triage and assessment, including secondary triage, victim accounting, emotional support, and information sharing. Gathering passengers involved in an accident (other than those transported to medical treatment facilities and those fatally injured) to a secure location where these services and functions can be accomplished will facilitate the provision of family assistance services to these individuals. Keeping in mind the potential sensitivities of differently affected passenger groups, it may be prudent to establish separate areas based on these sensitivities (for example, separating passengers and operating crew into a passenger gathering area [PGA] and a crew gathering area [CGA]). See [Appendix 7](#) for more information related to family assistance operations.

### Reunification Centers

As information is obtained and cross-referenced, if family members gathered in an FRC are seeking to reunite with passengers known to be gathered in a PGA or with crew in a CGA (and vice versa), reunification of such individuals/groups should not take place in view of others gathered in those same areas. A private, separate area (reunification center [RC]) is recommended to bring together those able to be reunited with their loved ones. See [Appendix 7](#) for more information related to family assistance operations.

## Family Assistance Center

When appropriate, temporary support facilities (FRCs, PGAs, and RCs) may transition to a single family assistance center (FAC) to support ongoing family assistance operations near the accident location. Ongoing family assistance needs may include the continued provision of safety, security, physiological needs (food, sleep, clothing), emotional, psychological, and spiritual care, information about the victim recovery and identification process and the investigation. See [Appendix 11 – Family Assistance Center](#) for more information related to the FAC.

## The Role of the Joint Family Support Operations Center

In the aftermath of a rail passenger train accident that meets the criteria established under 49 U.S.C. §1139, the NTSB will establish a Joint Family Support Operations Center (JFSOC) to coordinate the family assistance operation. The JFSOC (for example, in person, virtual, or both) is a collaborative workspace where participating organizations are brought together to monitor, plan, and execute a family assistance operation, maximizing all available resources. JFSOCs are designed to address the challenges of interagency communication and the sharing of information necessary for a successful family assistance operation. For more information related to JFSOC operations and a JFSOC's relationship to the larger family assistance operation, see *Concern 3: Information and Resources*, as well as [Appendix 8](#).

## JFSOC Coordination Call

Ideally, prior to deploying a response team to an accident that meets the criteria established under 49 U.S.C. §1139, the NTSB TDA will organize a JFSOC coordination call with relevant responding organizations. The purpose of this call is to establish communication as soon as practicable among the NTSB, the carrier, the Red Cross, and key family assistance operation stakeholders to gain situational awareness regarding initial family assistance efforts and the accident response in general. Although participants on the call may vary based on the nature of the accident, key stakeholders should include representatives from local, state, tribal, or federal responding organizations supporting the response. Bringing these stakeholders together provides an opportunity to verify and introduce points of contact (POC), review currently available information, confirm applicability of federal family assistance legislation, and review the operational status for all organizations participating in the call. The call also serves as an opportunity to deconflict duplicated efforts and commitment of resources, identify subsequent action items, and initiate planning for the initial JFSOC meeting. See



[Appendix 9 – JFSOC Coordination Call Agenda \(Sample\)](#) for more information regarding the JFSOC coordination call.

#### Virtual Family Assistance Operations/Remote Information Centers

Not all family assistance operations are likely to occur within the local jurisdiction or within the confines of the physical locations mentioned above. Family members gathered at hospitals, for example, may wish to participate in informational briefings provided at an FAC, but may not want to leave the hospital. Family members may be unable or may not want to travel to the established facilities but may still wish to receive the services (such as information; emotional and/or psychological support; and/or spiritual care) offered there. Remote information centers (RICs), and virtual family assistance operations should be considered by those with the responsibility for the provision of family assistance services.

Response organizations should consider the specific circumstances of an accident when determining the types of facilities and services that need to be established or made available, as well as the method(s) for delivery. Consideration should also be given to the potential for needing to adjust the delivery methods based on the duration of the family assistance response.

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## Fundamental Concern 1: Notification of Involvement

### Overview

Initial notification of involvement is communication to the family of a passenger that a loved one or someone close to them has been involved in an accident. The RPDFAA requires this notification to be provided through a plan established by the carrier; it can be accomplished proactively by outbound calls, once a person has been confirmed to have been involved (whether or not all individuals involved have been verified, and whether or not the person's status or location is known); it can also be accomplished reactively, by responding to inquiries from family members when there is reason to believe that their loved one(s) may have been involved in the accident (for example, their name appears on a passenger list, either preliminary or confirmed). The NTSB TDA's *Final Report - Task Force Recommendations* offers recommendations on methods to improve the timeliness of the notification provided by passenger rail carriers to the families of passengers involved in a passenger rail accident.<sup>10</sup>

It should be noted that notification of involvement is different from notification of a death. The medicolegal jurisdiction (medical examiner or coroner) or law enforcement agency is responsible for performing death notifications, which typically occur only after a victim's identification has been confirmed.

Acknowledging that the information (for example, emergency contacts) a carrier may have readily available about their passengers following an accident may be minimal and may require the commitment of significant time and resources to consolidate, this should not delay the activation of a notification process. Family members will likely attempt to establish contact with the carrier immediately after learning about an accident. To facilitate prompt contact, in accordance with the RPDFAA, carriers are required both to publicize a reliable toll-free telephone number and to provide suitably trained staff to handle calls received from the families of the passengers.<sup>11</sup> Carriers should plan to effectively manage inbound and outbound calls immediately following an accident, while the passenger list reconciliation process is underway and while efforts are being made by the carrier to gather appropriate contact information for the families of their passengers. The affected carrier should also consider other communication

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<sup>10</sup> <https://www.nts.gov/tda/TDADocuments/Rail-Task-Force-Final-Report-without-Plan.pdf>

<sup>11</sup> [Title 49 United States Code \[U.S.C.\] §24316](#)

channels available to both the carrier and the families of passengers. Although the toll-free telephone number is a legislated requirement, family members may attempt to engage with the carrier through other means, including in person, email, website, social media, or other public-facing platforms.

The Act requires carriers to have an established process in place for providing timely notification to families of passengers involved in a rail passenger train accident, as well as any other person injured or killed in a rail passenger accident train, prior to providing any public notice of the names of passengers aboard the train.<sup>12</sup> Regardless of the method by which family members are notified of their loved one's involvement in an accident, initial notification of involvement can be extremely difficult for those receiving this news. Individuals delivering these communications, as well as those receiving inquiries about an accident should, therefore, be prepared and suitably trained in delivering this type of information. If carriers require assistance from the Red Cross or any other suitably trained individuals when notifying family members, a mutually agreed-upon plan should be established and exercised in advance of an accident.



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<sup>12</sup> [Title 49 United States Code \[U.S.C.\] §24316](#)

## Response Partner Matrix

The following matrix highlights the roles of response partners associated with the fundamental concern of families of passengers: notification of involvement. A "✓" in an intersecting cell in the matrix indicates the presence of related FSTs for each organization.

**FIGURE 3.** Response Partner Matrix (Concern 1 - Notification of Involvement)

Associated Response Partners	 Notification of Involvement	 Victim Accounting	 Information and Resources	 Personal Effects
NTSB	✓	✓	✓	✓
Carrier	✓	✓	✓	✓
Red Cross			✓	
DOS	✓	✓	✓	✓
FBI		✓	✓	✓
DHHS		✓		✓
DOD		✓		
FEMA			✓	
FPS			✓	

## Family Support Tasks (Fundamental Concern 1: Notification of Involvement)

The FSTs associated with initial notification of involvement are listed below, organized by response partner.

### NTSB FSTs

- Inform the carrier(s) involved in the rail passenger train accident regarding the applicability of 49 U.S.C. §1139.
- Inform the DOT regarding the applicability of 49 U.S.C. §1139 or 49 U.S.C. §24316.
- Request from the carrier a copy of the passenger list, based on the best available information at the time of the request, with the names of the passengers who were aboard the accident rail passenger train.
- Designate and publicize the name and telephone number of a director of family support services (NTSB TDA chief or other TDA-appointed representative) to serve as a federal POC for the families of passengers involved in the accident and to act as a liaison between the carrier and the families of passengers. The NTSB's

TDA division addresses family members' requests for information regarding the agency's investigation, family assistance operations, and services provided by the carrier and the Red Cross.

- If requested, provide information on the passenger list about a specific passenger to their family, to the extent that the NTSB TDA representative considers appropriate. Advise family members of the carrier's toll-free number. Notify the carrier POC of family contact information.
- Ensure that family members receive the carrier's toll-free number and are made aware of support services being provided by the carrier and the Red Cross.
- Monitor open-source media to determine when the carrier's toll-free number becomes publicly available.
  - Publicize the carrier's toll-free number through NTSB social media platforms.
  - Call the carrier's toll-free number to verify its operational status and to determine how information is being provided to callers seeking information.
- Maintain communication with the carrier to remain current regarding the status of family notification (for example, number of family groups notified, number for which notification was attempted, number still pending notification). See [Appendix 10](#) for additional information.

#### Carrier FSTs

- In addition to the accident notification requirements under 49 *Code of Federal Regulations (CFR)* 830.5, as soon as practicable, complete and submit the NTSB TDA Accident Notification Supplemental Information Worksheet (see [Appendix 5 - TDA Accident Notification Supplemental Information Form](#)) to [assistance@ntsb.gov](mailto:assistance@ntsb.gov).
- Provide the NTSB and the Red Cross NTSB and/or JFSOC liaison, immediately upon request, with a copy of the passenger list, based on the best available information at the time of the request.
  - Provide subsequent versions of the passenger list to the NTSB upon request and at regular intervals as agreed upon by the carrier and the NTSB, based on the specific circumstances of the accident. The information contained on the passenger list should be the best available information at the time the request is made or at the agreed-upon intervals. See [Appendix 6](#) for additional information. Provide an updated passenger list to the Red Cross NTSB and/or JFSOC liaison (if initially requested) at the same time as those provided to the NTSB.

- Establish a process for notifying the family members regarding the passengers' involvement in the accident.<sup>13</sup>
- If the carrier requires the utilization of the Red Cross or any other suitably trained individuals to initiate notification, a mutually agreed-upon plan should be established in advance and included in the carrier's plan filed with the NTSB, the Secretary of Transportation, and the Secretary of Homeland Security.
- Notify family members as soon as possible to verify whether a passenger was aboard the train (even if the names of all passengers have not yet been verified).
- Establish a toll-free telephone number to allow family members to contact the carrier directly for information regarding the carrier's assistance to family members. Consider the following:
  - Modify the normal "hold" message. Similar considerations should be made for "on-hold" soundtrack(s) for phone lines that may receive incoming calls following an accident to eliminate music, sales information, and similar non-accident-related messages. Similar considerations should be made for all public interfaces.
  - Ensure that sufficient staff are designated to manage an increase in call volume from family members immediately following an accident.
  - Ensure that the toll-free call center staff are adequately trained and prepared to work with affected family members.
  - Establish a process for efficiently gathering critical information from callers to aid in timely notification and to facilitate subsequent engagement regarding the family assistance operation and available services.
  - Gather and share contact data collected from affected family members both internally and with federal, state, tribal, and local response organizations (for example, data from multiple call centers, multiple family members of the same passenger) through the JFSOC.
  - Establish a process to follow up with callers who have been identified as affected family members.
  - Determine and share information about services that will be made immediately available to affected family members in the aftermath of an accident.
  - Ensure the accessibility of information to callers with varying access and functional needs (for example, speakers of languages other than English,

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<sup>13</sup> The carrier is under no obligation to publicly release the names of passengers; however, if the carrier elects to do so, the carrier should provide notification to family members prior to releasing this information. The carrier should give family members adequate time to notify other family members prior to public release.

- those who rely on teletypewriter (TTY) technology, and those who may have difficulty in understanding or processing complex information).
- Establish a plan to decommission the toll-free number as the family assistance operation transitions from an active response to long-term assistance.
  - Publicize the toll-free number and consider using both traditional and digital media outlets to emphasize the following information:
    - The name and accident train number of the carrier(s) involved. Provide any partner information.
    - The origination and destination cities, as well as stations in close proximity to the accident location.
    - The toll-free number is for family members of passengers believed to be on the train.
    - The carrier has activated its family assistance program in response to the accident and encourage families to contact the carrier through the toll-free number to receive additional information and support.
  - Inform families of passengers at the time of initial notification (or soon thereafter) about the involvement of the Red Cross and their available services and provide reminders throughout the operation about these services to address any needs for psychological, emotional, and spiritual care.
  - Coordinate directly with the Red Cross JFSOC liaison to address support requests for psychological, emotional, and spiritual care as they are received by the carrier's family assistance teams or other sources and ensure that adequate facility space is available for providing these services and for accommodating support services staff.
  - Provide the DOS information about any foreign passengers to facilitate interaction with appropriate foreign embassies.
  - Establish a plan for providing media updates regarding the carrier's family assistance operation. Consider providing information regarding:
    - Availability of the toll-free number.
    - Establishment of family assistance facilities.
    - Progress of the family notification process (the number of families notified, the number of families remaining to be notified, and/or completion of the process).
    - Information regarding resources available to passengers' families.



## DOS FSTs

- Provide official notification to foreign governments of citizens involved in the accident. Such notifications will take place after obtaining necessary information on foreign passengers from the carrier.
- Assist the carrier in notifying US citizens who may reside in, or who are traveling, outside the United States that a member of their family has been involved in a rail passenger train accident.

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## Fundamental Concern 2: Victim Accounting and Identification

### Overview

Upon learning of their loved one's involvement in an accident, a family member's primary concern will shift to locating their loved one. The overall process for locating survivors and identifying fatally injured passengers is known as *victim accounting*.

The jurisdiction where the accident occurred is ultimately responsible for accounting for all fatalities and survivors of the MCI; however, the process requires collaboration and sharing of information between the rail passenger carrier involved in the accident and agencies at the local, Tribal, State, and Federal level. These agencies include offices of emergency management (for purposes of this document, the term *OEM* includes emergency management agencies and emergency management offices), fire departments, emergency medical services (EMS), law enforcement, medicolegal authorities (medical examiner/coroner), public health authorities, and hospitals that have received patients. Carriers are essential in this process and hold critical information—the passenger list—that serves as the foundation for the victim accounting process. It is important for carriers to develop an understanding of the mass casualty response and develop a process to consider requests for the passenger list. Carriers should be prepared to provide information from the passenger list with relevant agencies particularly during the life safety (fire/rescue) phase of the response.

Depending on the size and scope of the accident, the victim accounting process will have unique complexities and involve many different organizations.

Victim accounting requires the integration of data from multiple sources including, but not limited to, local law enforcement, OEM, medical examiner/coroner, emergency support function-8 (ESF-8), PGA and hospitals.<sup>14</sup>

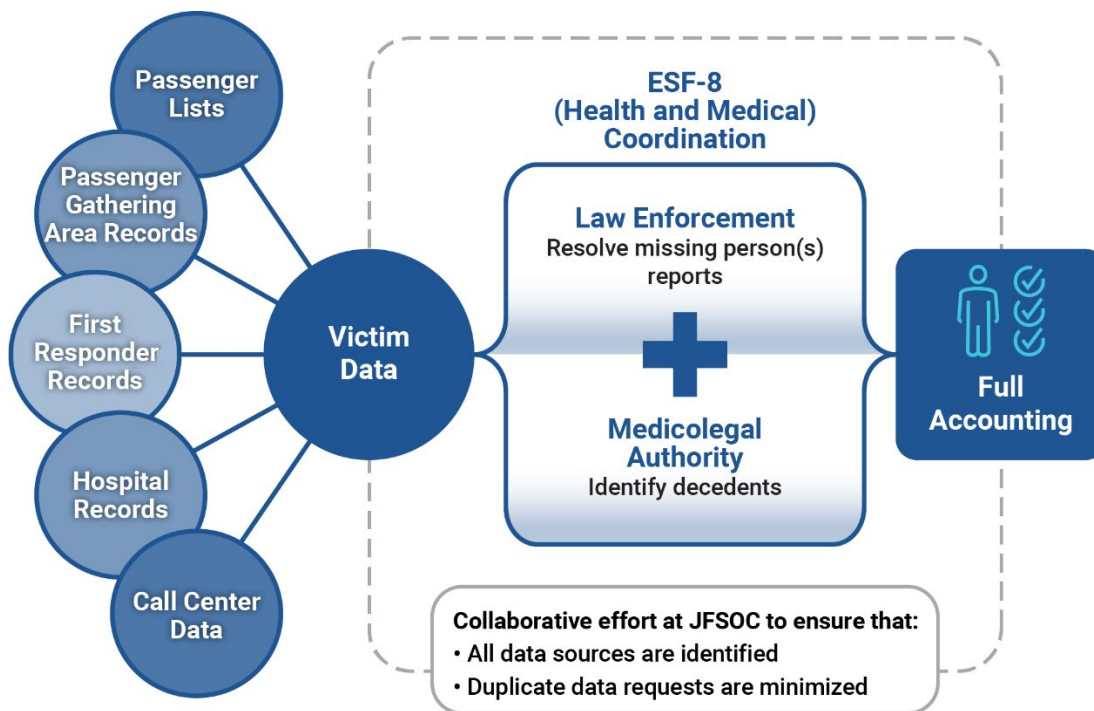
The following graphic may be useful in helping response partners to better understand the interconnectedness between themselves and other agencies in meeting the needs of survivors and family members. Timely sharing of information allows for the

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<sup>14</sup> Emergency Support Functions (ESFs) group governmental and certain private sector capabilities into an organizational structure to provide support, resources, program implementation, and services needed to save lives, protect property and the environment, restore essential services and critical infrastructure, and help victims and communities return to normal following domestic incidents. ESF-8 is the public health and medical services position.

reunification of family members with survivors and aids in the efficient identification of the fatalities by the presiding medicolegal jurisdiction.

**FIGURE 4.** Victim Accounting Process



The primary outcomes of victim accounting are the reunification of survivors with their families and the recovery, identification, and return of the deceased to their families. As a result of victim accounting, family assistance response agencies can offer equal access to information and services to all survivors and family members.

### The Role of the NTSB

The NTSB has the responsibility to coordinate with the carrier, Red Cross, and federal agencies to integrate within the broader local family assistance response effort. To meet this responsibility, the NTSB works with the affected jurisdiction to determine the relevant responding agencies and their specific roles in the response.

To help navigate the local jurisdiction's response to a rail passenger train accident, the NTSB coordinates with the carrier to gather information as previously described in [Concern 1: Initial Notification of Involvement](#). The NTSB contacts first response agencies as soon as practicable following notification of an accident to gain situational awareness including determining which agency(ies) are involved in the victim accounting process

and connecting them with the carrier and the Red Cross, if they have not previously been in contact. Given the size and scope of a response, the local jurisdiction may rely on support from the NTSB and other federal agencies, while the carrier and the Red Cross rely upon the information gathered through collaboration with the local response community.

The NTSB shall receive, upon request, the passenger list (based on the best available information at the time of the request) from the carrier involved in the accident.<sup>15</sup> Subject to privacy and other legal protections, the NTSB may share information on the list with the family of a passenger; or with local, Tribal, State, or Federal agencies that have direct responsibilities for determining the whereabouts or welfare of a passenger (victim accounting). Further details regarding the process for local, Tribal, State, or Federal agencies to request information from the passenger list are available in the *NTSB's Guidance for Passenger List Distribution and Control* ([Appendix 6](#)).

The NTSB has the primary responsibility for facilitating the recovery and identification of fatally injured passengers involved in a rail passenger train accident.<sup>16</sup> To fulfill this obligation, the NTSB establishes contact with the presiding medicolegal authority after notification of an accident to discuss the size, scope, and characteristics of the accident, the capabilities and resources of the local jurisdiction, and the availability of federal support. To ensure adequate resources for the presiding medicolegal authority to fulfill their responsibilities, the NTSB maintains agreements with the FBI, the DHHS, and the DOD to support the identification operation. As part of a collaborative effort, when assistance is needed, the NTSB also helps integrate federal resources into existing state and local mass fatality response teams. Additionally, the NTSB may serve in an advisory role to the presiding medicolegal authority, sharing practical experiences gained by responding to numerous mass casualty and mass fatality accidents.

### The Role of the Carrier

The carrier has a key role in the victim accounting effort: reconciling and disseminating information from the passenger list. As described above, the passenger list is integral both in determining the identities of passengers aboard and in providing information for family members seeking to confirm their loved one was involved in the accident. Upon request, the carrier must provide a copy of the passenger list, based on

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<sup>15</sup> [49 U.S.C. § 1139\(d\)\(1\)](#)

<sup>16</sup> [49 U.S.C. § 1139\(b\)\(1\)](#)

the best available information at the time of the request, to the NTSB, the Secretary of Transportation, and the Secretary of Homeland Security, whether or not the names have been verified.<sup>17</sup> Subject to privacy and other legal protections the NTSB may share information on the list with the family of a passenger; or with local, Tribal, State, or Federal agencies responsible for determining the whereabouts or welfare of a passenger. The carrier should develop procedures for addressing requests from the local response community for the passenger list during the life safety phase of a response and in support of victim accounting efforts. For additional guidance, please review *NTSB's Guidance for Passenger List Distribution and Control* ([Appendix 6](#)).

Additionally, the carrier can assist the local response community with reunifying family members with passengers once the victim accounting process has determined the location and status of each surviving passenger involved. The information compiled by the carrier through various public interfaces, including the required toll-free telephone number, will help connect the responsible local, state, tribal, and federal agencies with the families of passengers seeking information regarding the location of, and reunification with, survivors.

### The Role of Agencies with Direct Responsibilities for Victim Accounting

Local, Tribal, State, or Federal agencies with direct responsibilities for victim accounting should submit requests for passenger list information to the NTSB. See [Appendix 6](#) for specific guidance about the request process. The NTSB will consider requests and provide relevant information, using a secure electronic platform, to agencies responsible for investigating missing persons (lead law enforcement agency), death investigation (the medicolegal authority), and healthcare community interface (emergency management). Agencies requesting information should be prepared to address questions from the NTSB regarding the role of the requesting agency in the victim accounting process, use of the data, and mechanisms to prevent public disclosure.

The information contained on a passenger list is sensitive because it contains personally identifiable information and because family members of those onboard the train may not yet be aware of their loved-one's involvement in the accident. It is essential for agencies to establish appropriate document control measures and ensure safeguards are in place to prevent public disclosure of the information contained on the passenger list. This information must not be released beyond agencies that have a direct

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<sup>17</sup> [49 USC 24316](#)

operational role in victim accounting. Agencies may not release information from the passenger list obtained from the NTSB without express permission from the NTSB.<sup>18</sup>

The local response community should develop policies and procedures to share information about the whereabouts and welfare of victims with the NTSB, the carrier, and the Red Cross. This collaborative approach facilitates the provision of services and information to accident victims and their family members, as required by federal legislation.

### The Role of the Medicolegal Authority

The term *medicolegal authority* used in this document includes any medical examiner, coroner, justice of the peace, or other official who oversees the death investigation following an accident. The presiding medicolegal authority is responsible for the recovery, identification, death notification, and disposition of fatalities. The recovery process typically includes search, detection, documentation, collection, transportation, and storage of human remains. While recovery operations are ongoing, the medicolegal authority will begin interviewing family members to gather antemortem data including the collection of DNA reference samples from biological family members. Additionally, the medicolegal authority will collect postmortem data from the remains.

Positive identification requires the comparison of antemortem records and samples with similar information collected from the remains. Following positive identification, the medicolegal authority will perform official death notifications to the legal NOK or utilize law enforcement. The NOK will decide on burial or disposition arrangements requiring further coordination among the medicolegal authority, the carrier's service provider for transportation of human remains, and the families' designated funeral homes. Rail passenger train accidents resulting in fragmentation of human remains add additional operational complexity. The medicolegal authority will determine the need for reassociation of human remains (bringing together the disassociated remains of fatalities). When reassociation is necessary, the medicolegal authority may need to make additional notifications to the NOK, depending on their notification preferences. Human remains that are unidentified at the conclusion of the identification process, known as *group remains*, also require disposition. Prior to the disposition of any group, the medicolegal authority should consult with the families.

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<sup>18</sup> [49 U.S.C. §1139](#)

Medicolegal authorities throughout the United States vary greatly in available resources (such as staff and facility size) and capabilities. Some may be able to manage the response to a rail passenger train accident with existing staff and facilities while others may require assistance. To ensure adequate resources for the presiding medicolegal authority to accomplish their responsibilities, the NTSB will work with the medicolegal authority to determine the need for additional federal resources to support identification of the fatalities and to integrate the federal resources into existing local and state mass fatality response operations.

## Response Partner Matrix

The following matrix highlights the roles of response partners associated with the fundamental concern of families of passengers: victim accounting. A “✓” in an intersecting cell in the matrix indicates the presence of related FSTs for each organization.

**FIGURE 5.** Response Partner Matrix (Concern 2 - Victim Accounting)

Associated Response Partners	 Notification of Involvement	 Victim Accounting	 Information and Resources	 Personal Effects
NTSB	✓	✓	✓	✓
Carrier	✓	✓	✓	✓
Red Cross			✓	
DOS	✓	✓	✓	✓
FBI		✓	✓	✓
DHHS		✓		✓
DOD		✓		
FEMA			✓	
FPS			✓	

## Family Support Tasks (Fundamental Concern 2: Victim Accounting and Identification)

The FSTs associated with victim accounting are listed below, organized by response partner.

### NTSB FSTs

- Encourage response organizations to share information about the whereabouts of fatalities and the whereabouts and welfare of survivors with the carrier, the Red Cross, and the NTSB as part of the victim accounting process.



- Request from the carrier a copy of the passenger list based on the best available information at the time of the request, with the names of the passengers aboard the train involved in the accident.
- Share information on the passenger list with the family of a passenger; or with a local, Tribal, State, or Federal agency responsible for determining the whereabouts or welfare of a passenger.
  - Inform the receiving agency that they may not release information from the passenger list obtained from the NTSB without express permission from the NTSB.
  - Provide the carrier with information about the requesting agency and what information from the passenger list was shared.
  - See [Appendix 6](#) for distribution guidance.
- Provide family members with contact information for local law enforcement and/or the presiding medicolegal authority to answer questions and concerns regarding victim accounting, identification processes, and reunification efforts.
- Facilitate the federal response in the recovery and identification of fatally injured passengers involved in the accident.
- Provide an NTSB toll-free number and email address to families of passengers for them to obtain information on the accident investigation and the victim identification and recovery process.
- Discuss with the presiding medicolegal authority the capabilities and resources of their office staff for conducting fatality identification, based on the size and scale of the accident, including possible coordination with the Armed Forces DNA Identification Laboratory (AFDIL) for DNA identification.
- Notify the DHHS to initiate the National Disaster Medical System (NDMS) and the appropriate Disaster Mortuary Operational Response Team (DMORT) personnel, supplies, and equipment to assist in the management of fatality identification, as needed.
- Facilitate coordination between DOS and the presiding medicolegal authority to support fatality recovery and identification efforts for foreign passengers, as applicable.
- Inform the presiding medicolegal authority about the role of the Red Cross and the support services available to families, to include coordinating efforts for memorial services associated with individuals or group remains interment and psychological, emotional, and spiritual care.

#### Carrier FSTs

- Ensure the provision of an adequate number of private rooms or space in the FAC for families of passengers to meet with the presiding medicolegal authority or

designee, for the authority to obtain antemortem information and/or the collection of DNA reference samples. These rooms can also be used for other family assistance support services when the medicolegal authority has completed their process.

- Inform the presiding medicolegal authority about the carrier's assistance that is available to families of passengers related to the disposition of human remains. If assistance is being provided via a service provider, ensure that connections are made between the family and the service provider.
- Provide the NTSB, and the Red Cross NTSB and/or JFSOC liaison upon request, a copy of the passenger list, based on the best available information at the time of the request.
  - Provide subsequent versions of the passenger list to the NTSB, the Secretary of Transportation, and the Secretary of Homeland Security, upon request and at regular intervals as agreed upon by the carrier and the NTSB, based on the specific circumstances of the accident. The information contained on the passenger list should be the best available information at the time the request is made or at the agreed-upon intervals. Provide an updated passenger list to the Red Cross (if initially requested) at the same time as those provided to the NTSB.
- Develop procedures to consider and respond to additional requests for the passenger list from the local response community.
  - Provide the NTSB with information about the requesting agency and what information from the passenger list was shared.
  - See [Appendix 6](#) for distribution guidance.
- Ensure the publicized toll-free telephone number remains operable with sufficient capacity to handle the anticipated call volume to collect contact information of family members of passengers.
- Coordinate adequate private spaces or rooms within the FAC, or other suitable location, for the presiding medicolegal authority, the Red Cross, and other family assistance operation organizations to communicate privately with families of passengers. These spaces should be equipped with sufficient technology to allow for virtual meetings (for example, conference calls and web-based video conferences).
- Consult with the family of each fatally injured passenger in coordination with the medicolegal authority about available resources related to the disposition of human remains.
- Inform families of passengers at the time of initial notification (or soon thereafter) about the involvement of the Red Cross and their available services and provide reminders throughout the operation about these services to address any needs for psychological, emotional, and spiritual care.

- Coordinate directly with the Red Cross JFSOC liaison to address support requests for psychological, emotional, and spiritual care as they are received by the carrier family assistance teams or other sources and ensure that adequate facility space is available to provide these services and to accommodate support services staff.
- Coordinate with the Red Cross spiritual care staff to address family member requests for memorial services.

#### DOS FSTs

- Assist the presiding medicolegal authority in acquiring the necessary information to facilitate the identification of foreign national fatalities and to complete death certificates.
- Assist in obtaining dental and medical records and DNA reference samples from families of fatalities of foreign nationals.

#### FBI FSTs

- Provide the NTSB, upon request, an FBI Evidence Response Team (ERT), and other FBI Laboratory assets to assist with fatality documentation and identification as directed by the presiding medicolegal authority.

#### DHHS FSTs

- Provide the resources of the NDMS, DMORT, the Victim Information Center (VIC) team, and other fatality management personnel, supplies, and equipment to assist the presiding medicolegal authority and the NTSB with the examination and identification of fatalities.
- Provide, if necessary, a Disaster Portable Morgue Unit (DPMU) and the necessary personnel, equipment, and supplies to augment the capabilities of the presiding medicolegal authority.
- Follow the *DMORT Standard Operating Procedures for National Transportation Safety Board Activations*.
- Assign the necessary DMORT personnel, based on necessary skills and existing capabilities, to assist the presiding medicolegal authority with fatality identification and mortuary services.
- Monitor the status of all incoming antemortem records, including dental, medical, and DNA data, to ensure that all records have been received. Take steps to obtain missing records and radiographs.
- Use a specially trained VIC team to interview families of passengers, both on- and off-site, regarding antemortem identification and disposition of human remains.

- Coordinate with the presiding medicolegal authority to integrate qualified personnel into the morgue operation.
- Assist the presiding medicolegal authority in notifying families of passengers of positive identification, including an explanation of how identification was determined, if necessary.
- Ensure the accuracy of the chain of custody by reviewing documentation and human remains prior to their release to the designated funeral director.
- Assist the presiding medicolegal authority with the reassociation of human remains following the identification process.
- Provide the NTSB with contact information for the NOK, gathered from the antemortem interview.
- Employ a standard antemortem questionnaire and disposition-of-remains form that can be adapted to meet local medical examiner and state requirements. The form will be used to obtain directions from the lawfully authorized NOK regarding their wishes for human remains that may later be identified as those of their family member.

**Note:** Information collected from families of passengers is strictly confidential and is ultimately under the control of the presiding medicolegal authority.

#### DOD FSTs

- Provide the use of a military installation, such as the Charles C. Carson Center for Mortuary Affairs located at Dover Air Force Base, in support of mortuary operations, if requested.
- Provide resources from the Armed Forces Medical Examiner System (AFMES) and AFDIL to assist in the identification effort and to conduct appropriate DNA comparison testing on specimens submitted by the presiding medicolegal authority.

**Note:** AFMES and AFDIL personnel may travel to the accident location to assist with victim identification.

- Provide available medical and dental records and DNA reference samples of fatalities who may have antemortem records from prior or current military service.

## Fundamental Concern 3: Information and Resources

### Overview

Immediately following a rail passenger train accident, families of passengers may seek answers to many questions and inquire about the next steps in the process. Questions like, “What do we do now? What comes next? What happens long-term? To whom can we turn for answers?” are common among the survivors and the families of passengers involved in a rail passenger train accident.

In the immediate aftermath of the accident, it is challenging both to determine what resources are available and ensure that the families of passengers are aware of these resources and how to access them. A major function of the JFSOC is to bring together the responding organizations to discuss roles, capabilities, and available resources to address the evolving needs of the families in a coordinated manner. See [Appendix 8](#) for additional information about the functions of the JFSOC and these roles, capabilities, and resources.

Depending on the circumstances of the accident, the associated response, and the resources available, various means of delivery may be used to provide services to family members. As a part of the local jurisdiction’s response plan, an FRC, PGA, or RC may be established in the immediate aftermath along with activation of local disaster relief organizations (like their local Red Cross chapter) to provide immediate support until another facility can be established to address needs in the longer term. If possible, the carrier should engage with local jurisdictions in the planning phase to develop awareness of their response plans. This may not always be possible, but at the very least, the carrier should be aware that the jurisdiction may have a family assistance plan in place and may be activating a response. The carrier should attempt to establish contact with the jurisdiction to coordinate efforts, which can be facilitated during the JFSOC coordination call and subsequent meetings. Additionally, the Red Cross should inform the NTSB and carrier during these coordination efforts of any local response activation or involvement on behalf of the local jurisdiction. See [Appendix 8](#) for more information.

The carrier should coordinate with the Red Cross to ensure that adequate space is available to provide necessary services and staff and to ensure that families have privacy. In some situations, services may be delivered virtually if a physical center is not necessary or possible. Virtual delivery may also be used to aid family members traveling to the accident location and those who may be unable or who may decide not to travel to the

accident location or visit the physical FAC (for example, families who wish to remain at a hospital with their injured loved one[s]).

## Response Partner Matrix

The following matrix highlights the roles of response partners associated with the fundamental concern of families of passengers: information and resources. A "✓" in an intersecting cell in the matrix indicates the presence of related FSTs for each organization.

**FIGURE 5.** Response Partner Matrix (Concern 3 - Information and Resources)

Associated Response Partners	 Notification of Involvement	 Victim Accounting	 Information and Resources	 Personal Effects
NTSB	✓	✓	✓	✓
Carrier	✓	✓	✓	✓
Red Cross			✓	
DOS	✓	✓	✓	✓
FBI		✓	✓	✓
DHHS		✓		✓
DOD		✓		
FEMA			✓	
FPS			✓	

## Family Support Tasks (Fundamental Concern 3: Information and Resources)

The FSTs associated with the provision of information and resources are listed below, organized by response partner.

### NTSB FSTs

- Designate the Red Cross as the organization with the primary responsibility for coordinating emotional care, psychological care, and family support services for the passengers and families of such passengers involved in a rail passenger train accident. Notify the Red Cross National Headquarters of the accident and their designation in accordance with 49 U.S.C. § 1139.
- Organize and facilitate a JFSOC coordination call with the carrier, the Red Cross, and other supporting federal, state, tribal, and local agencies as needed to become aware of the family assistance operation and response status.
- Coordinate and initiate requests for federal family assistance assets using MOAs/MOUs as determined necessary.

- Coordinate family assistance efforts with local response organizations and individuals, including the medical examiner, law enforcement, OEM, hospitals, and other responding organizations.
- Coordinate with DHS and FPS to provide law enforcement and security services at any federally leased, owned, or occupied facility, property, investigation site, operational area, asset, or other location owned, occupied, or secured by the federal government during the course of an NTSB investigation, hearing, meeting, or study, including facilities used for FACs, FRCs, and JFSOC operations and for press briefings, telecasts, and other functions.
- Coordinate through the NTSB Media Relations Division regarding family assistance efforts.
- Designate and publicize the name and telephone number of a director of family support services (NTSB TDA chief or other TDA-appointed representative) to serve as a federal POC for the families of passengers involved in the accident and to act as a liaison between the carrier and the families of passengers. The NTSB's TDA Division addresses family members' requests for information regarding the agency's investigation, family assistance operations, and services provided by the carrier and the Red Cross.
- Establish and maintain contact with families of passengers to keep them informed about support services, the accident investigation, and other accident investigation related concerns including relevant NTSB public hearings and meetings.
- Establish a JFSOC based upon available space in or near the FAC. Invite representatives of the carrier's family assistance response team, the Red Cross liaisons and other response organizations (for example, medicolegal authority, hospital association, ESF-8 representative, etc.) to actively participate in the JFSOC.
- Integrate the NTSB, the carrier, the Red Cross, and other relevant stakeholders to ensure that the travel and logistical support needs of the families of passengers are being addressed, giving special consideration to security, the quality of hotel rooms and facilities, privacy, and access and functional needs.
- Organize and facilitate family briefings to ensure that the families of passengers are provided information to the maximum extent practicable prior to any NTSB public briefing, about the accident, its causes, and any other findings from the NTSB's investigation.
- If the accident location remains under the control of the NTSB, assess the potential of a site visit for families of passengers. Accident scenes under the control of law enforcement officers require collaboration among the responsible agency, NTSB, carrier, the Red Cross, and other support agencies. Management of the site visit should be coordinated through the JFSOC. See [Appendix 16](#) for site visit considerations.

- Determine whether a 30-day extension is required for the Red Cross as the designated organization to ensure access to services by families of passengers beyond 30 days after the accident has occurred.<sup>19</sup>
- Within 45 days of the accident, monitor and respond accordingly to any unsolicited communications from attorneys received by families of passengers.<sup>20</sup>
- Coordinate with the FBI Victim Services Division (VSD) on the provision of federal family assistance activities if the investigation determines that the event is the result of an intentional criminal act.
- Inform families of passengers of NTSB public hearings and meetings pertaining to the investigation and provide information about attendance at the event.
- Ensure that briefings are made available simultaneously by electronic means for survivors/family members who are not able to attend briefings in person.
- Upon request, facilitate the sharing of contact information among survivors and/or family members.
- Coordinate an on-scene and post-response family assistance assurance review with the carrier and the Red Cross to review the family assistance operation and legislative requirements and to identify challenges and lessons learned, with the goal of enhancing operating plans and procedures in the future.

#### Carrier FSTs

- Provide the DOS representatives information about any foreign passengers to facilitate interaction with appropriate foreign embassies.
- Submit a plan to the NTSB, the Secretary of Transportation, and the Secretary of Homeland Security for addressing the needs of the families of passengers involved in a rail passenger train accident resulting in any loss of life.<sup>21</sup> See [Appendix 2](#) for submission guidance.
- Provide adequate training to the employees and agents of the carrier to meet the needs of survivors and family members following an accident.<sup>22</sup>
- Designate a representative (possibly a representative from the carrier's security division) to collaborate with the DHS FPS (with whom the NTSB has an MOU) and other law enforcement agencies (for example, local and state) to conduct a threat

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<sup>19</sup> [49 U.S.C. §1139\(g\)\(3\)](#)

<sup>20</sup> [49 U.S.C. §1139\(g\)\(2\)](#)

<sup>21</sup> [49 USC 24316](#)

<sup>22</sup> [49 USC 24316](#)



assessment to determine the necessary level of security to facilitate the safety of family members, survivors, and personnel in the FAC.

- Provide adequate training to employees and agents (for example, customer support, and reservations) to meet the needs of survivors and family members following an accident. Training topics should include, but are not limited to:
  - Federal transportation accident family assistance legislation.
  - The carrier's roles and available resources.
  - The role of response partners, including the Red Cross.
  - The employee's and agent's specific role.
  - Psychological first aid, crisis response, interpersonal communication and stress management.
- Secure private facilities at departure and arrival stations and stations in close proximity to the accident city as needed for use as family assistance facilities. Families of passengers may elect to gather at these locations while in transit to the accident location. Facilities established to support family assistance operations should be compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).<sup>23</sup>
- Coordinate with the local jurisdiction to secure a facility to serve as the FAC, considering size, services available, security, privacy, and proximity to the key elements of the family assistance operation. Make alternate accommodations to provide information and offer resources to families of passengers when a physical FAC is not established, or individuals elect not to travel to the primary FAC. Facilities established to support alternate accommodations should be ADA compliant.
- Ensure the accessibility of information to callers with varying access and functional needs (for example, speakers of languages other than English, those who rely on TTY technology, and those who may have difficulty in understanding or processing complex information).
- Establish a plan to decommission the toll-free number as the family assistance operation transitions from an active response to long-term assistance.
- Make provisions for a JFSOC to include meeting space, separate workspace, communication technologies, and logistical support for local, state, tribal, and federal response partners. If available, separate workspace may be made available for the NTSB and the Red Cross on a full- or part-time basis as needed.
- Designate a senior representative from the carrier (see [Appendix 8](#)) who will serve as the representative to the NTSB's designated director of family support services. This person will oversee the carrier's family assistance operation and may need to:

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<sup>23</sup> [42 U.S.C. §12102](#)

- Travel to various locations, such as the accident location, healthcare facilities, medicolegal facilities, JFSOC, and FAC.
  - Address questions regarding the carrier's emergency response plan (for example, service providers, available resources, and limits to family assistance support).
  - Participate in, or coordinate the participation of, an alternative spokesperson for family briefings.
- Designate a family assistance coordinator from the carrier who will serve as the primary POC regarding the carrier's day-to-day family assistance operations. Depending upon the unique nature of the accident and the resources available from the family assistance operation partner, it may be necessary for one individual to take on multiple roles or to delegate specific tasks to other individuals within their organization. See [Appendix 8](#) for additional duties.
- Designate a JFSOC liaison from the carrier, who will remain present in the JFSOC to coordinate the carrier's ongoing family assistance operations. This person should have the authority to make decisions and commit resources on behalf of the carrier. See [Appendix 8](#) for additional duties.
- Assign a primary POC to the Red Cross JFSOC liaison to ensure that requests from families of passengers or survivors received by the carrier for emotional and psychological care services or referrals are addressed, regardless of where the families or survivors are located. See [Appendix 8](#) for additional duties.
- Coordinate directly with the Red Cross JFSOC liaison to address support requests for psychological, emotional, and spiritual care as they are received by the carrier's family assistance teams or other sources and ensure that adequate facility space is available for providing these services and for accommodating support services staff.
- Inform families of passengers at the time of initial notification (or soon thereafter) about the involvement of the Red Cross and their available services and provide reminders throughout the operation about these services to address any needs for psychological, emotional, and spiritual care.
- Review with the NTSB, the Red Cross, and other relevant stakeholders the travel and logistical support needs (for example, video, software, or other technological needs) of the families of passengers, giving special consideration to security, the quality of hotel rooms and facilities, privacy, equitable access, and functional needs.
- As part of broader FAC security, establish a badging system that uniquely identifies families of passengers for access within family assistance facilities. Considerations should be made regarding badging requirements for individuals who have a need to access family assistance facilities.

- Coordinate through the JFSOC badging requirements for support personnel; if necessary, consider development of a unique badging system to ensure proper identification and to allow access for other supporting agencies. In unique cases, the NTSB, in coordination with the carrier, will decide on the layout and design of the badge(s).
- Coordinate adequate private spaces or rooms within the FAC, or other suitable location, for the presiding medicolegal authority, the Red Cross, and other family assistance operation organizations to communicate privately with families of passengers. These spaces should be equipped with sufficient technology to allow for virtual meetings (for example, conference calls and web-based video conferences).
- Provide a dedicated area in the FAC, or other suitable location, for the Red Cross to establish as an area for families and survivors to grieve privately.<sup>24</sup>
- Provide a dedicated area in the FAC, or other suitable location, for the Red Cross to establish on-site temporary respite care for families who arrive with minors.
- Work with any organization designated under 49 U.S.C. §1139(a)(2) on an ongoing basis to ensure that families of passengers receive an appropriate level of services and assistance following each accident<sup>25</sup> Advise the NTSB and the Red Cross if family members have expressed that they would prefer not to engage directly with carrier representatives so that alternative means of offering information and services are made available.
- Designate a contact person(s) to support families of passengers while they remain in the accident location. If possible, this person(s) should continue to be the carrier interface with the family until the family returns to their residence, or until the conclusion of the on-site family assistance operation.
  - If the family has not previously received official notification, notify them of their loved one's involvement in the accident at an appropriate time as soon as possible after the family arrives in the accident location.
  - For family members not present in the accident location, establish a contact for remote support to ensure the delivery of daily updates during the on-site family assistance operation. Communicate any changes to the support structure between on-site/immediate support and long-term support to the TDA JFSOC liaison as soon as possible.
- Monitor the needs of injured passengers and their family members at each medical treatment facility through ongoing coordination with the Red Cross JFSOC liaison and other agency JFSOC liaisons to ensure access to information and resources.

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<sup>24</sup> [49 U.S.C. §1139\(c\)\(2\)](#)

<sup>25</sup> [49 U.S.C. §24316](#)

- Ensure equal treatment of the families of revenue passengers, non-revenue passengers, and any other victim of the accident.
- Participate in the preparation and logistical coordination of an accident site visit for families of passengers if such a visit is determined appropriate by the NTSB.
- If appropriate and requested by the families of passengers, support the Red Cross in facilitating a memorial service for any future burial of unidentified human remains through coordination with the families, the local medicolegal authority, and other relevant local organizations.
- Consult with families of passengers about any carrier-sponsored monument, including any inscriptions.
- Coordinate directly with the FBI VSD regarding the provision of family assistance if the event is determined to be an intentional criminal act and the NTSB relinquishes investigative priority to the FBI.
- Provide reasonable compensation to the Red Cross for services they have provided if requested by the Red Cross National Headquarters.<sup>26</sup>
- Participate in the NTSB-coordinated family assistance assurance reviews, both on-scene and post-response, to review the family assistance operation and legislative requirements, resolve problems, and update operating plans and procedures.
- Work with any organization designated under section 1139(a)(2) on an ongoing basis to ensure that families of passengers receive an appropriate level of services and assistance following an accident.<sup>27</sup>
- Provide adequate training to the employees and agents of the carrier to meet the needs of survivors and family members following an accident.<sup>28</sup>

#### Red Cross FSTs

- Designate an NTSB liaison familiar with federal family assistance legislation, the NTSB-Red Cross MOU, and the roles and responsibilities of the Red Cross, the NTSB, and the carrier to support the regional or local Red Cross leadership team assigned to serve as the functional lead for emotional, spiritual and psychological care in accordance with applicable legislation.
- Assign a JFSOC liaison who will remain present in the JFSOC to coordinate ongoing family assistance operations on behalf of the Red Cross with the authority to make decisions on behalf of the organization. The liaison is responsible for participating in daily JFSOC status meetings, providing operational updates and the status of daily activities and services, disseminating information within their organization as appropriate, and maintaining up-to-date information regarding

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<sup>26</sup> [49 U.S.C. §24316](#)

<sup>27</sup> [49 U.S.C. §24316](#)

<sup>28</sup> [49 U.S.C. §24316](#)

available Red Cross or other disaster relief organization staffing and services within the FAC and any alternate locations (for example, hospitals).

See [Appendix 10](#) for the JFSOC status report form.

- Ensure that Red Cross staff and volunteers, and any other personnel approved by the Red Cross to provide support services, are familiar with the roles and responsibilities of the NTSB, the carrier, the Red Cross, and other federal partners during a federal family assistance operation.
- Review with the carrier, the NTSB, and other stakeholders the travel and logistical support being provided to the families of passengers by the carrier, to provide subject matter expertise related to the access and functional needs of family members and survivors, to ensure needs are being adequately addressed.
- Coordinate with the carrier liaison assigned to the Red Cross to address any requests from families of passengers or survivors for emotional, spiritual and/or psychological care services or referrals, regardless of their locations (for example, an FAC, hotel, hospitals, other medical treatment facilities, home).
- Assign Red Cross disaster mental health staff or volunteers to coordinate with local disaster relief organizations or agencies to address on-site emotional and psychological care requests during the JFSOC coordination phase.
- Assign Red Cross spiritual care staff or volunteers or coordinate with local disaster relief organizations or agencies to provide on-site spiritual care at the FAC, or other suitable location.
- Coordinate staffing activities with the carrier to ensure the badging of support personnel providing emotional, spiritual, and psychological care services at the FAC, or other suitable location is adequate. If necessary, consider developing a unique badging system to ensure proper identification and allow access for other disaster relief organizations approved by the Red Cross.
- Coordinate with the carrier to establish a dedicated area in the FAC, or other suitable location, for families and survivors to grieve privately<sup>29</sup> and provide appropriate staff, as necessary.
- Coordinate with the carrier to establish a secure location within the FAC, or other suitable location, for on-site temporary respite care for survivors or families of passengers who arrive with minors, if determined necessary by the carrier, the Red Cross, and the NTSB, and provide appropriate staff.
- Coordinate with the carrier to identify adequate private spaces or rooms with technology and telephonic capabilities within the FAC, or other suitable location, necessary for providing on-scene, remote or virtual psychological, emotional, and spiritual care support to survivors and/or families of passengers.

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<sup>29</sup> [49 U.S.C. §1139\(c\)\(2\)](#)

- Manage spontaneous unaffiliated volunteers, as necessary.
- Manage unsolicited donations through partnerships with local community entities experienced in donation management, as necessary.
- For resources other than psychological, emotional, and spiritual care support, coordinate with the carrier to identify the availability for additional resources needed.
- Employ an accounting system to accurately record cost data in specific cost categories in case the Red Cross National Headquarters later requests reimbursement for their response from the carrier.
- Facilitate a memorial service for any future burial of unidentified human remains through consultation with the families, the local medicolegal authority, the carrier, and other relevant local organizations, when appropriate. Should these services occur outside of the JFSOC operational period, coordinate directly with the carrier's identified individual(s) for ongoing support. Notify the NTSB TDA Red Cross coordinator of the date and time of the event. See [Appendix 8](#) for more information.
- Participate in the preparation and logistical coordination of an accident site visit for survivors or families of passengers if such a visit is determined appropriate by the NTSB. Coordinate with the NTSB and the carrier to ensure that staffing for psychological, emotional, and spiritual support is sufficient for the event.
- Participate in the NTSB-coordinated assurance reviews, both on-scene and post-response, to review the family assistance operation and legislative requirements, resolve problem areas, and update operating plans and procedures.
- Upon request, provide psychological, emotional, and spiritual care staff in public locations where any NTSB-conducted public hearing and meetings, or comparable proceeding, are being held or transmitted.
- Coordinate directly with the FBI VSD if an event is determined to be an intentional criminal act and the NTSB relinquishes investigative priority to the FBI. Coordinate directly with the FBI VSD to determine their ongoing involvement in the response under agreements the Red Cross has or makes with the FBI VSD.

#### DOS FSTs

- Assign a representative to the JFSOC to coordinate DOS-related issues, including obtaining records (dental and medical) and DNA reference samples from the families of foreign nationals, upon request. See [Appendix 8](#) for JFSOC information.
- Provide logistical and communications support in establishing contact with foreign authorities and individuals abroad to aid the carrier, the Red Cross, and the NTSB in fulfilling their legislated duties, if possible.

- Provide adequate personnel to assist the federal family assistance operation for accidents involving significant numbers of foreign nationals.
- Provide interpretation and/or translation services (via DOS staff or a contracted provider) as needed to facilitate communications with the families of passengers and all interested parties, during family briefings.
- Assist families of foreign nationals (both fatalities and survivors) with entry into the United States, extending or granting of visas to eligible applicants, as determined necessary.
- Respond to requests of the families of passengers for information and assistance, as appropriate.

#### FBI FSTs

- If the FBI is asked to support the local response community with family assistance services, assign a JFSOC liaison to coordinate with the NTSB, the carrier, and the Red Cross to ensure integration into the federal family assistance operation.
- If the rail passenger train accident is determined to be an intentional criminal act, assume responsibility for the investigation from the NTSB; the FBI VSD will assume federal family assistance activities, including the following:
  - Coordinate with the NTSB TDA to ensure an effective transfer of the federal family assistance operation to reduce any additional distress to families of passengers during the transition.
  - Coordinate with the carrier and the Red Cross regarding any ongoing responsibilities or roles they have for a federal criminal investigation.

#### FEMA FSTs

- Assign a JFSOC liaison to coordinate with federal, state, and local officials concerning emergency management-related issues, if requested by the NTSB. See [Appendix 8](#) for more JFSOC information.
- Provide personnel and communication assets to facilitate communication from the accident location to the NTSB Response Operations Center (ROC), if requested by the NTSB.
- Provide personnel to assist in public information dissemination, including assistance in establishing and staffing external media support centers at the accident location, wreckage hangar, locations associated with the family assistance operation, airport(s), train stations, and other areas that may attract media interest, if requested by the NTSB.

## FPS FSTs

- Coordinate with the NTSB to determine security vulnerabilities and countermeasure requirements for location(s) associated with the NTSB investigation (for example, the accident location, those associated with the family assistance operation, and those for media briefings).
- Conduct building and facility security risk assessments, upon request from the NTSB; provide a threat assessment and recommendations for ensuring the security of designated locations.
- Ensure that sufficient certified, trained, and equipped uniformed personnel are provided as deemed appropriate by the threat assessment, for each designated location.
- Provide protection for designated NTSB Board Members and NTSB staff during the response.
- Provide an FPS-operated mobile command vehicle to afford interoperable communications and a secure environment for use by NTSB staff.
- Assume responsibility for investigations associated with FPS activities at NTSB-designated locations as required, and share current intelligence with the NTSB, as permitted by law, regulation, or order, at the affected location.



## Fundamental Concern 4: Personal Effects

### Overview

The disposition of personal effects (PE) is a fundamental concern of survivors and the families of passengers involved in a rail passenger train accident. For this framework, PE are defined as items worn or carried with a person at the time of travel, including carry-on luggage or checked baggage (including pets) but not items shipped as cargo. PE often hold sentimental or financial value and may be of particular interest to survivors and the families of passengers involved in an accident.

### Response Partner Matrix

The following matrix highlights the roles of response partners associated with the fundamental concern of passengers and families of passengers: PE. A "✓" in an intersecting cell in the matrix indicates the presence of related FSTs for each organization.

**FIGURE 6.** Response Partner Matrix (Concern 4 – Personal Effects)

Associated Response Partners	 Notification of Involvement	 Victim Accounting	 Information and Resources	 Personal Effects
NTSB	✓	✓	✓	✓
Carrier	✓	✓	✓	✓
Red Cross			✓	
DOS	✓	✓	✓	✓
FBI		✓	✓	✓
DHHS		✓		✓
DOD		✓		
FEMA			✓	
FPS			✓	

## Family Support Tasks (Fundamental Concern 4: Personal Effects)

The FSTs associated with PE are listed below, organized by response partner.

### NTSB FSTs

- Ensure that the affected carrier is aware of its role and responsibilities regarding the PE management obligations outlined in federal legislation.
- Via JFSOC meetings, support the coordination of PE management by response partners. See [Appendix 8](#) for JFSOC information.
- Ensure that families of passengers are informed about PE recovery, processing, claim, and disposition.

**Note:** For PE retained for an accident investigation or a criminal investigation, securing and returning these items is typically the responsibility of the investigative agency. The NTSB will coordinate the return of PE it has retained for an accident investigation.

- Determine the evidentiary value of PE, retain relevant items, and release non-evidentiary PE to the appropriate organization, communicating with the families of passengers regarding the investigative process and the return of PE taken into NTSB custody.
- Coordinate the transition of PE management to the FBI if the event has been determined to be a criminal act.

### Carrier FSTs

- Ensure that a plan is in place to address the management of PE within the control of the carrier. See [Appendix 17](#) for more information. The carrier may consider using a third party that has experience in managing PE associated with MCIs.
- Ensure that families are consulted about the disposition of all personal effects and any possessions of the passenger within the control of the carrier (regardless of their condition)<sup>30</sup>
  - Retain any unclaimed possession of a passenger for at least 18 months.<sup>31</sup>
  - Return all possessions to the family unless needed for the accident investigation or any criminal investigation.<sup>32</sup>
- Consult with passengers and family members regarding the disposition of remains of fatally injured carry-on or checked pets.

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<sup>30</sup> [49 U.S.C. §24316](#)

<sup>31</sup> [49 U.S.C. §24316](#)

<sup>32</sup> [49 U.S.C. §24316](#)

- Consult with the NTSB regarding the carrier's role in the return process of any PE in the custody of the NTSB.
- Consult with other entities that may have a role in the management of PE (for example, medicolegal authority, local, state, tribal, or federal law enforcement, insurance companies, hospitals) to determine the carrier's role in the return process of any PE in the custody of those entities.
- Provide updates regarding the PE management process during daily JFSOC meetings and post-accident response discussions. Specific information to share includes the role of a third-party, progress and complications with the return process, and the status of unclaimed or unwanted items 18 months following the accident. See [Appendix 8](#) and [Appendix 10](#) for additional information.
- Notify family members both before and after any planned disposal of unclaimed PE within the control of the carrier that will occur after the required 18-month retention period lapses.<sup>33</sup>

#### DOS FSTs

- Coordinate with the necessary foreign mission(s) to facilitate consulate and customs services for the return of PE to the country of destination, as applicable.

#### FBI FSTs

- Coordinate with the NTSB regarding the transition of PE management if the event is determined to be a criminal event.
- Coordinate with the carrier regarding their role in the return of PE if the event is determined to be a criminal event.

#### DHHS FSTs

- Coordinate with the presiding medicolegal authority regarding the management of PE physically associated with human remains.

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<sup>33</sup> [49 U.S.C. §24316](#)

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## Appendix 1 - Federal Family Assistance Legislation

### 49 U.S.C. §1139

§1139. Assistance to passengers involved in rail passenger accidents and families of such passengers

(a) In General.-As soon as practicable after being notified of a rail passenger accident within the United States involving a rail passenger carrier and resulting in any loss of life, and for which the National Transportation Safety Board will serve as the lead investigative agency, the Chairman of the Board shall-

(1) designate and publicize the name and telephone number of a director of family support services who shall be an employee of the Board and shall be responsible for acting as a point of contact within the Federal Government for the families of passengers involved in the accident and a liaison between the rail passenger carrier and the families; and

(2) designate an independent nonprofit organization, with experience in disasters and post-trauma communication with families, which shall have primary responsibility for coordinating the emotional care, psychological care, and family support services of passengers involved in the accident and the families of such passengers.

(b) Responsibilities of the Board.-The Board shall have primary Federal responsibility for-

(1) facilitating the recovery and identification of fatally injured passengers involved in an accident described in subsection (a); and

(2) communicating with the families of passengers involved in the accident as to the roles, with respect to the accident and the post-accident activities, of-

(A) the organization designated for an accident under subsection (a)(2);

(B) Government agencies; and

(C) the rail passenger carrier involved.

(c) Responsibilities of Designated Organization.-The organization designated for an accident under subsection (a)(2) shall have the following responsibilities with respect to passengers involved in the accident and the families of such passengers:

(1) To provide emotional care, psychological care, and family support services, in coordination with the disaster response team of the rail passenger carrier involved.

(2) To take such actions as may be necessary to provide an environment in which the families may grieve in private.

(3) To meet with passengers involved in the accident and the families of such passengers who have traveled to the location of the accident, to contact the families unable to travel to such location, and to contact all passengers and affected families regularly thereafter until such time as the organization, in consultation with the director of family support services designated for the accident under subsection (a)(1), determines that further assistance is no longer needed.

(4) To arrange a suitable memorial service, in consultation with the passengers and families.

(d) Passenger Lists.-

(1) Requests for passenger lists by the director of family services.-

(A) Requests by director of family support services.-It shall be the responsibility of the director of family support services designated for an accident under subsection (a)(1) to request, as soon as practicable, from the rail passenger carrier involved in the accident a passenger list, which is based on the best available information at the time of the request.

(B) Use of information.-The director of family support services may not release to any person information on a list obtained under subparagraph (A), except that the director may, to the extent the director considers appropriate, provide information on the list about a passenger to-

(i) the family of the passenger; or

(ii) a local, Tribal, State, or Federal agency responsible for determining the whereabouts or welfare of a passenger.

(C) Limitation.-A local, Tribal, State, or Federal agency may not release to any person any information obtained under subparagraph (B)(ii), except if given express authority from the director of family support services.

(D) Rule of construction.-Nothing in subparagraph (C) shall be construed to preclude a local, Tribal, State, or Federal agency from releasing information that is lawfully obtained through other means independent of releases made by the director of family support services under subparagraph (B).

(2) Requests for passenger lists by designated organization.-

(A) Requests by designated organization.-The organization designated for an accident under subsection (a)(2) may request from the rail passenger carrier involved in the accident a passenger list.

(B) Use of information.-The designated organization may not release to any person information on a passenger list but may provide information on the list about a passenger to the family of the passenger to the extent the organization considers appropriate.

(e) Continuing Responsibilities of the Board.-In the course of its investigation of an accident described in subsection (a), the Board shall, to the maximum extent practicable, ensure that the families of passengers involved in the accident-

(1) are briefed, prior to any public briefing, about the accident and any other findings from the investigation; and

(2) are individually informed of and allowed to attend any public hearings and meetings of the Board about the accident.

(f) Use of Rail Passenger Carrier Resources.-To the extent practicable, the organization designated for an accident under subsection (a)(2) shall coordinate its activities with the rail passenger carrier involved in the accident to facilitate the reasonable use of the resources of the carrier.

(g) Prohibited Actions.-

(1) Actions to impede the board.-No person (including a State or political subdivision thereof) may impede the ability of the Board (including the director of family support services designated for an accident under subsection (a)(1)), or an organization designated for an accident under subsection (a)(2), to carry out its responsibilities under this section or the ability of passengers involved in the accident and the families of such passengers to have contact with one another.

(2) Unsolicited communications.-No unsolicited communication concerning a potential action or settlement offer for personal injury or wrongful death may be made by an attorney (including any associate, agent, employee, or other representative of an attorney) or any potential party to the litigation, including the railroad carrier or rail passenger carrier, to an individual (other than an employee of the rail passenger

carrier) injured in the accident, or to a relative of an individual involved in the accident, before the 45th day following the date of the accident.

(3) Prohibition on actions to prevent certain care and support services.-No State or political subdivision thereof may prevent the employees, agents, or volunteers of an organization designated for an accident under subsection (a)(2) from providing emotional care, psychological care, and family support services under subsection (c)(1) in the 30-day period beginning on the date of the accident. The director of family support services designated for the accident under subsection (a)(1) may extend such period for not to exceed an additional 30 days if the director determines that the extension is necessary to meet the needs of the passengers and families and if State and local authorities are notified of the determination.

(h) Definitions.-In this section:

(1) Rail passenger accident.-The term "rail passenger accident" means any rail passenger disaster that-

(A) results in any loss of life;

(B) the Board will serve as the lead investigative agency for; and

(C) occurs in the provision of-

(i) interstate intercity rail passenger transportation (as such term is defined in section 24102); or

(ii) high-speed rail (as such term is defined in section 26105) transportation, regardless of its cause or suspected cause.

(2) Rail passenger carrier.-The term "rail passenger carrier" means a rail carrier providing-

(A) interstate intercity rail passenger transportation (as such term is defined in section 24102); or

(B) interstate or intrastate high-speed rail (as such term is defined in section 26105) transportation,

except that such term does not include a tourist, historic, scenic, or excursion rail carrier.

(3) Passenger.-The term "passenger" includes-



(A) an employee of a rail passenger carrier aboard a train;

(B) any other person aboard the train without regard to whether the person paid for the transportation, occupied a seat, or held a reservation for the rail transportation; and

(C) any other person injured or killed in a rail passenger accident, as determined appropriate by the Board.

(4) Passenger list.-The term "passenger list" means a list based on the best available information at the time of the request, of the name of each passenger aboard the rail passenger carrier's train involved in the accident. A rail passenger carrier shall use reasonable efforts, with respect to its unreserved trains, and passengers not holding reservations on its other trains, to ascertain the names of passengers aboard a train involved in an accident.

(i) Limitation on Statutory Construction.-Nothing in this section may be construed as limiting the actions that a rail passenger carrier may take, or the obligations that a rail passenger carrier may have, in providing assistance to the families of passengers involved in a rail passenger accident.

(j) Relinquishment of Investigative Priority.-

(1) General rule.-This section (other than subsection (g)) shall not apply to a rail passenger accident if the Board has relinquished investigative priority under section 1131(a)(2)(B) and the Federal agency to which the Board relinquished investigative priority is willing and able to provide assistance to the victims and families of the passengers involved in the accident.

(2) Board assistance.-If this section does not apply to a rail passenger accident because the Board has relinquished investigative priority with respect to the accident, the Board shall assist, to the maximum extent possible, the agency to which the Board has relinquished investigative priority in assisting families with respect to the accident.

(k) Savings Clause.-Nothing in this section shall be construed to abridge the authority of the Board or the Secretary of Transportation to investigate the causes or circumstances of any rail accident, including development of information regarding the nature of injuries sustained and the manner in which they were sustained for the purposes of determining compliance with existing laws and regulations or for identifying means of preventing similar injuries in the future, or both.

(Added Pub. L. 110-432, div. A, title V, §501(a), Oct. 16, 2008, 122 Stat. 4894 ; amended Pub. L. 114-94, div. A, title XI, §11316(a), Dec. 4, 2015, 129 Stat. 1676 ; Pub. L. 115-254, div. C, §1109(d), Oct. 5, 2018, 132 Stat. 3435 ; Pub. L. 118-63, title XII, §1215(c), May 16, 2024, 138 Stat. 1428 .)

## EDITORIAL NOTES

### AMENDMENTS

**2024**-Pub. L. 118-63, §1215(c)(1), substituted "to passengers involved in rail passenger accidents and families of such passengers" for "to families of passengers involved in rail passenger accidents" in section catchline.

Subsec. (a). Pub. L. 118-63, §1215(c)(2), substituted "Board shall" for "National Transportation Safety Board shall" in introductory provisions.

Subsec. (a)(2). Pub. L. 118-63, §1215(c)(3), substituted "emotional care, psychological care, and family support services" for "emotional care and support" and "passengers involved in the accident and the families of such passengers" for "the families of passengers involved in the accident".

Subsec. (c). Pub. L. 118-63, §1215(c)(4)(A), substituted "passengers involved in the accident and the families of such passengers" for "the families of passengers involved in the accident" in introductory provisions.

Subsec. (c)(1). Pub. L. 118-63, §1215(c)(4)(B), substituted "emotional care, psychological care, and family support services" for "mental health and counseling services".

Subsec. (c)(3). Pub. L. 118-63, §1215(c)(4)(C), substituted "passengers involved in the accident and the families of such passengers who have traveled to the location of the accident" for "the families who have traveled to the location of the accident" and inserted "passengers and" before "affected families".

Subsec. (c)(4). Pub. L. 118-63, §1215(c)(4)(D), inserted "passengers and" before "families".

Subsec. (d). Pub. L. 118-63, §1215(c)(5), amended subsec. (d) generally. Prior to amendment, subsec. (d) related to requests for passenger lists and use of such information.

Subsec. (g)(1). Pub. L. 118-63, §1215(c)(6)(A), substituted "passengers involved in the accident and the families of such passengers" for "the families of passengers involved in the accident".

Subsec. (g)(3). Pub. L. 118-63, §1215(c)(6)(B), in heading, substituted "prevent certain care and support" for "prevent mental health and counseling", and, in text, substituted "providing emotional care, psychological care, and family support services" for "providing mental health and counseling services" and inserted "passengers and" before "families".

Subsec. (h)(1)(B). Pub. L. 118-63, §1215(c)(7)(A), struck out "National Transportation Safety" before "Board".

Subsec. (h)(4). Pub. L. 118-63, §1215(c)(7)(B), added par. (4).

**2018**-Subsec. (a). Pub. L. 115-254, §1109(d)(1), substituted "resulting in any loss of life, and for which the National Transportation Safety Board will serve as the lead investigative agency" for "resulting in a major loss of life" in introductory provisions.

Subsec. (h)(1). Pub. L. 115-254, §1109(d)(2), amended par. (1) generally. Prior to amendment, text read as follows: "The term 'rail passenger accident' means any rail passenger disaster resulting in a major loss of life occurring in the provision of-

"(A) interstate intercity rail passenger transportation (as such term is defined in section 24102); or

"(B) interstate or intrastate high-speed rail (as such term is defined in section 26105) transportation,

regardless of its cause or suspected cause."

**2015**-Subsec. (a)(1). Pub. L. 114-94, §11316(a)(1), substituted "telephone number" for "phone number".

Subsec. (a)(2). Pub. L. 114-94, §11316(a)(2), substituted "post-trauma communication with families" for "post trauma communication with families".

Subsec. (j). Pub. L. 114-94, §11316(a)(3), substituted "rail passenger accident" for "railroad passenger accident" in pars. (1) and (2).

## **STATUTORY NOTES AND RELATED SUBSIDIARIES**

### **EFFECTIVE DATE OF 2015 AMENDMENT**

Amendment by Pub. L. 114-94 effective Oct. 1, 2015, see section 1003 of Pub. L. 114-94, set out as a note under [section 5313 of Title 5](#), Government Organization and Employees.

### **ESTABLISHMENT OF TASK FORCE**

Pub. L. 110-432, div. A, title V, §503, Oct. 16, 2008, 122 Stat. 4899 , provided that:

"(a) Establishment.-The Secretary [of Transportation], in cooperation with the National Transportation Safety Board, organizations potentially designated under [section 1139\(a\)\(2\) of title 49, United States Code](#), rail passenger carriers (as defined in [section 1139\(h\)\(2\) of title 49, United States Code](#)), and families which have been involved in rail accidents, shall establish a task force consisting of representatives of such entities and families, representatives of rail passenger carrier employees, and representatives of such other entities as the Secretary considers appropriate.

"(b) Model Plan and Recommendations.-The task force established pursuant to subsection (a) shall develop-

"(1) a model plan to assist rail passenger carriers in responding to passenger rail accidents;

"(2) recommendations on methods to improve the timeliness of the notification provided by passenger rail carriers to the families of passengers involved in a passenger rail accident;

"(3) recommendations on methods to ensure that the families of passengers involved in a passenger rail accident who are not citizens of the United States receive appropriate assistance; and

"(4) recommendations on methods to ensure that emergency services personnel have as immediate and accurate a count of the number of passengers onboard the train as possible.

"(c) Report.-Not later than 1 year after the date of the enactment of this Act [Oct. 16, 2008], the Secretary shall transmit a report to the House of Representatives Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure and the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation containing the model plan and recommendations developed by the task force under subsection (b)."

## Title 49 U.S.C. § 24316

### Plans to address needs of families of passengers involved in rail passenger accidents

- (a) Submission of plan.-Not later than 6 months after the date of the enactment of the Rail Safety Improvement Act of 2008, a rail passenger carrier shall submit to the Chairman of the National Transportation Safety Board, the Secretary of Transportation, and the Secretary of Homeland Security a plan for addressing the needs of the families of passengers involved in any rail passenger accident involving a rail passenger carrier intercity train and resulting in a major loss of life.
- (b) Contents of plans.-A plan to be submitted by a rail passenger carrier under subsection (a) shall include, at a minimum, the following:
- (1) A process by which a rail passenger carrier will maintain and provide to the National Transportation Safety Board, the Secretary of Transportation, and the Secretary of Homeland Security immediately upon request, a list (which is based on the best available information at the time of the request) of the names of the passengers aboard the train (whether or not such names have been verified), and will periodically update the list. The plan shall include a procedure, with respect to unreserved trains and passengers not holding reservations on other trains, for the rail passenger carrier to use reasonable efforts to ascertain the names of passengers aboard a train involved in an accident.
  - (2) A process for notifying the families of the passengers, before providing any public notice of the names of the passengers, either by utilizing the services of the organization designated for the accident under section 1139(a)(2) of this title or the services of other suitably trained individuals.
  - (3) A plan for creating and publicizing a reliable, toll-free telephone number within 4 hours after such an accident occurs, and for providing staff, to handle calls from the families of the passengers.
  - (4) A process for providing the notice described in paragraph (2) to the family of a passenger as soon as the rail passenger carrier has verified that the passenger was aboard the train (whether or not the names of all of the passengers have been verified).
  - (5) An assurance that, upon request of the family of a passenger, the rail passenger carrier will inform the family of whether the passenger's name appeared on any preliminary passenger manifest for the train involved in the accident.
  - (6) A process by which the family of each passenger will be consulted about the disposition of all remains and personal effects of the passenger within the control of the rail passenger carrier and by which any possession of the passenger within the control of the rail passenger carrier (regardless of its

condition)-

- (A) will be retained by the rail passenger carrier for at least 18 months; and
- (B) will be returned to the family unless the possession is needed for the accident investigation or any criminal investigation.

(7) A process by which the treatment of the families of nonrevenue passengers will be the same as the treatment of the families of revenue passengers.

(8) An assurance that the rail passenger carrier will provide adequate training to the employees and agents of the carrier to meet the needs of survivors and family members following an accident.

(9) An assurance that the family of each passenger or other person killed in the accident will be consulted about construction by the rail passenger carrier of any monument to the passengers, including any inscription on the monument.

(10) An assurance that the rail passenger carrier will work with any organization designated under section 1139(a)(2) of this title on an ongoing basis to ensure that families of passengers receive an appropriate level of services and assistance following each accident.

(11) An assurance that the rail passenger carrier will provide reasonable compensation to any organization designated under section 1139(a)(2) of this title for services provided by the organization.

(c) Use of information.-Neither the National Transportation Safety Board, the Secretary of Transportation, the Secretary of Homeland Security, nor a rail passenger carrier may release to the public any personal information on a list obtained under subsection (b)(1), but may provide information on the list about a passenger to the passenger's family members to the extent that the Board or a rail passenger carrier considers appropriate.

(d) Limitation on statutory construction.-

(1) Rail passenger carriers.-Nothing in this section may be construed as limiting the actions that a rail passenger carrier may take, or the obligations that a rail passenger carrier may have, in providing assistance to the families of passengers involved in a rail passenger accident.

(2) Investigational authority of Board and Secretary.-Nothing in this section shall be construed to abridge the authority of the Board or the Secretary of Transportation to investigate the causes or circumstances of any rail accident, including the development of information regarding the nature of injuries sustained and the manner in which they were sustained, for the purpose of determining compliance with existing laws and regulations or identifying means of preventing similar injuries in the future.

(e) Limitation on liability.-A rail passenger carrier shall not be liable for damages in any action brought in a Federal or State court arising out of the performance of the rail passenger carrier in preparing or providing a passenger list, or in providing information concerning a train reservation, pursuant to a plan submitted by the rail passenger carrier under subsection (b), unless such liability was caused by conduct of the rail passenger carrier which was grossly negligent or which constituted intentional misconduct.

(f) Definitions.-In this section, the terms "passenger" and "rail passenger accident" have the meaning given those terms by section 1139 of this title.

(g) Funding.-Out of funds appropriated pursuant to section 20117(a)(1)(A), there shall be made available to the Secretary of Transportation \$500,000 for fiscal year 2010 to carry out this section. Amounts made available pursuant to this subsection shall remain available until expended.

(Added Pub. L. 110-432, [div. A, title V, §502\(a\)](#), [Oct. 16, 2008](#), 122 Stat. 4897 .)

#### References in text

The date of the enactment of the Rail Safety Improvement Act of 2008, referred to in subsec. (a), is the date of enactment of div. A of Pub. L. 110- 432, which was approved Oct. 16, 2008.

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## Appendix 2 – Rail Passenger Carrier Assurance Submission Guidance

### DOT, NTSB, and DHS Family Assistance Plan Filings<sup>34</sup>

The RPDFAA and the Rail Passenger Disaster Family Assistance Act require that rail passenger carriers submit to the Secretary of Transportation, the Chairman of the NTSB, and the Secretary of Homeland Security a plan for addressing the needs of the families of passengers involved in any rail passenger train accident involving a rail passenger carrier intercity train and resulting in any loss of life. The contents of the plan should address, at a minimum, how the carrier will comply with the 11 assurances identified in the above-mentioned Family Assistance Act.

Attached is guidance for submitting a copy of the family assistance plan to the NTSB TDA and providing additional information for emergency contact information.

### NTSB TDA Submissions

- I. NTSB TDA maintains copies of carrier family assistance plans for the NTSB.
- II. Carriers should include a 24-hour emergency response contact number with plans submitted to NTSB TDA.
  - a. This is a telephone number the NTSB can use to communicate with a carrier for confirmation or notification of a rail passenger train disaster at any time of the day.
    - i. To file a new assurance plan or update an existing plan on file with the NTSB, submit by email to: [assistance@ntsb.gov](mailto:assistance@ntsb.gov)
  - b. Submit by Postal Mail
    - i. National Transportation Safety Board  
Attn: Rail Passenger Carrier Liaison  
Transportation Disaster Assistance Division  
490 L'Enfant Plaza East, SW  
Washington, DC 20594
- III. Carriers should update existing plans and/or cover letters on file with the NTSB when any of the following occur:
  - a. A change in the carrier's 24-Hour Emergency Contact Number or dispatch/operations center number.

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<sup>34</sup> This document is available on the NTSB's website: <https://www.ntsb.gov/tda/er/Pages/tda-fa-rail.aspx>

- b. A change in the business name of the carrier.
- c. A change in the carrier's operator or business partner agreement (doing business as).
- d. A change or update in family assistance services provided under an agreement associated with the carrier's partnership or when making a change to a new or different service provider.

Appendix 3 – TDA Rail Passenger Carrier Contact Listing<sup>35</sup>

Rail Passenger Carrier:
Primary Mailing Address:
Operations Center (24/7 Dispatch) Phone:
Public Website:
Senior Executive Name (for example, chief executive officer, president):
Director of Safety Name:
Partners:
Name of Family Assistance Program (such as CARE, SAT):

**Rail Passenger Carrier Emergency Response/Family Assistance Primary POC**

Name:
Title:
Cell Phone:
Desk Phone:
Email:

<sup>35</sup> This form is available on the NTSB's website: <https://www.nts.gov/tda/er/Pages/tda-fa-rail.aspx>

<b>Alternate Emergency Response/ Family Assistance POCs</b> List any individuals who will act on behalf of the primary POC in their absence or who will be coordinating your company's emergency response. Up to 5 alternate POCs may be entered.
<b>Alternate 1</b>
Name:
Title:
Phone:
Email:
<b>Alternate 2</b>
Name:
Title:
Phone:
Email:
<b>Alternate 3</b>
Name:
Title:
Phone:
Email:
<b>Alternate 4</b>
Name:
Title:
Phone:
Email:
<b>Alternate 5</b>
Name:
Title:
Phone:
Email:

Please return completed form to [assistance@ntsb.gov](mailto:assistance@ntsb.gov)

## Appendix 4 – Rail Passenger Carrier Accident Notification Flow

The following steps provide carriers guidance for reporting rail passenger train accidents resulting in fatalities. The process describes the recommended steps to follow when the carrier will be activating their family assistance program.

STEP 1: Notify the NTSB immediately of a fatal rail passenger train accident in accordance with 49 *CFR* §840.3 (Executed by carrier operations center or safety department.)

1. CALL NTSB ROC: 202-314-6290.
2. Provide the following information (49 *CFR* §830.6) to the ROC watch officer:
  - a. Names of owner and operator (carrier name) of the rail passenger train.
  - b. Number of crew.
  - c. Date and time of the accident.
  - d. Last point of departure and point of intended destination of the train.
  - e. Accident location (Position of the train with reference to some easily defined geographical point).
  - f. Number of persons aboard, number of fatalities, and number seriously injured.
  - g. Nature of the accident, weather conditions, and the extent of damage to the train, as known.
  - h. A description of any hazardous material aboard (including explosives, radioactive materials, or other dangerous articles carried).
3. Provide a primary point of contact and phone number for the carrier for follow-up.

STEP 2: Notify NTSB TDA of the carrier's activation of their family assistance plan:

1. Call NTSB ROC: 202-314-6290.
2. Ask for the TDA duty officer.
3. Provide the following information:
  - a. Place (or general vicinity) of accident, number of passengers and crew (based on preliminary departure information), and number of injuries and fatalities (if known).
  - b. Train number and/or route name, origination, connection points,

destination, and passenger demographics (nationalities, large groups, etc. [ if known]).

- c. Name and telephone number of the person/persons in charge of the carrier's response, passenger manifest reconciliation, and family notification process.
- d. Name, telephone number, and location of the facility designated as the FAC and JFSOC.

STEP 3: Complete the "NTSB TDA Accident Notification Supplemental Information Worksheet." (see [Appendix 5](#)):

1. Form is available on the NTSB's website:  
<https://www.nts.gov/tda/er/Pages/tda-fa-rail.aspx>

Email worksheet to TDA: [assistance@nts.gov](mailto:assistance@nts.gov).

STEP 4: Upon request, provide the NTSB TDA chief or Designated TDA Representative the most current reconciled copy of the passenger & crew list:

1. Send the passenger list via email to both of the following addresses:
  - a. [roc@nts.gov](mailto:roc@nts.gov)
  - b. [assistance@nts.gov](mailto:assistance@nts.gov)
2. Include the subject line: "URGENT MANIFEST URGENT (FWD to TDA)".
3. Passenger list(s) should be submitted in an Excel format.
4. The file should include the date, time, and a submission version number.
5. The following information should be included (when available):
  - a. Passenger name (last name, first name, middle name)
  - b. Seat assignment
  - c. Passenger category (such as passenger, crew member, non-revenue)
  - d. Passenger contact information
  - e. Passenger date of birth
  - f. Special assistance codes (for example, wheelchair required)
  - g. Gender
  - h. Nationality
  - i. Emergency contact information

STEP 5: The NTSB TDA chief or designated TDA representative will establish a JFSOC coordination call with the TDA duty officer, TDA carrier liaison, the carrier, the Red Cross, and available local, state, tribal, or federal responding agencies/entities.

1. Contact the TDA duty officer.
2. Conference call agenda items:
  - a. Status of emergency response and family assistance plan activation.
  - b. Carrier's publicized toll-free telephone number.

- c. FRC locations and status.
- d. FAC location(s) and activation status.
- e. Carrier's go-team status.
- f. Status of notification of passengers' family members.
- g. Carrier's family assistance/ emergency response point(s) of contact.
- h. Carrier's family assistance coordinator.
- i. Passenger list updates and crew/passenger accountability.
- j. Additional information as needed.

NTSB TDA CONTACT INFORMATION:

Direct:  
202-314-6185  
[assistance@ntsb.gov](mailto:assistance@ntsb.gov)

Through the NTSB ROC:  
202-314-6290  
[roc@ntsb.gov](mailto:roc@ntsb.gov)

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## Appendix 5 - TDA Accident Notification Supplemental Information Form<sup>36</sup>

<p>DISCLAIMER: The information requested on this form will be used by the NTSB and our federal partners during the initial deployment phase of an NTSB accident investigation. Completing this form is voluntary; however, <b>rail passenger carriers must still comply with notification and reporting requirements in accordance with 49 U.S.C § 830.5</b></p>					
<p><b>Instructions:</b> Please complete the following fields with as much information as possible. This information should be submitted to the TDA Division <b>within 1-2 hours</b> after the rail passenger carrier makes the official accident notification to the NTSB Response Operations Center. For questions, please call TDA at 202-314-6185.</p>					
<b>Rail Passenger Carrier Operator:</b>					
<b>Operated As:</b>				<b>Train Number:</b>	
<b>Accident Site location:</b> (for example, city & state)				<b>Local Time of Accident:</b>	
<b>Total Number of Persons on Board</b>					
<b>PASSENGERS INFORMATION</b>					
<b>Adults:</b>		<b>Minors (under 18):</b>		<b>Infants (lap only):</b>	
				<b>Non-Revenue:</b>	
<b>CREW INFORMATION</b>					
<b>Number of Train Crew:</b>				<b>Number of Service Crew:</b>	
				<b>Total Crew:</b>	
<b>ADDITIONAL DETAILS</b>					
<b>HazMat onboard?</b> Yes <input type="radio"/> No <input type="radio"/> Unknown <input type="radio"/>			<b>List Special Groups onboard</b> (for example, VIPs, special needs groups, student groups)		
<b>Train Fatalities:</b> Yes <input type="radio"/> No <input type="radio"/> Unknown <input type="radio"/>			<b>Ground Fatalities:</b> Yes <input type="radio"/> No <input type="radio"/> Unknown <input type="radio"/>		
<b>Number of Train Fatalities</b> (if known)			<b>Number of Ground Fatalities</b> (if known):		
<b>Is there ground structure damage?</b> Yes <input type="radio"/> No <input type="radio"/>					
<b>Additional Details</b> (office buildings, residences, shopping mall, other):					
<b>Train/Route Originating Station:</b>				<b>Destination Station:</b>	
<b>Toll-free Family Assistance Phone Number:</b>				<b>EOC Phone Number:</b>	
<b>Rail Passenger Carrier FRC Location(s):</b>					
<b>Rail Passenger Carrier FAC Planned Location:</b>					
<b>Partner Agreements for this Train/Route:</b>					
<b>Rail Passenger Carrier POC Name, Title &amp; Direct Phone Number:</b>					
<p>Save this form as a PDF; name it; and submit to <a href="mailto:assistance@ntsb.gov">assistance@ntsb.gov</a></p>					

<sup>36</sup> Form is available on the NTSB's website: <https://www.ntsbt.gov/tda/er/Pages/tda-fa-rail.aspx>

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## Appendix 6 - NTSB Guidance for Passenger List/Manifest Distribution & Control38

Determining the whereabouts and welfare of those involved in a mass casualty incident (MCI) is the responsibility of the jurisdiction in which a transportation accident occurs. Following certain transportation accidents, the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) has primary Federal responsibility for facilitating the recovery and identification of fatally-injured passengers.<sup>39</sup> Accounting for all victims (including fatalities, the injured and uninjured), following a transportation accident MCI requires collaboration and sharing of information between agencies at the local, Tribal, State, and Federal level (i.e., emergency management, fire department, emergency medical services (EMS), law enforcement, the medical examiner/coroner, public health authorities, and hospitals that have received patients), and the air carrier or rail passenger carrier involved in the accident (herein referred to as carrier). Carriers are essential in this accounting process. They hold critical information – the passenger list/manifest (herein referred to as the passenger list) – that serves as the foundation for the victim accounting process. Because information on a passenger list is sensitive, organizations with access to the information must protect the privacy of victims and their families, while fulfilling their obligation to account for all victims.

### **What information is included on the passenger list?**

Carriers are obligated to provide the NTSB a list based on the best available information at the time of the request, of the names of the passengers aboard the aircraft or passenger train.<sup>40</sup> Carriers are also obligated to periodically update the list. The term “passenger” is broadly defined to include everyone aboard the aircraft or passenger train (crew, revenue, and non-revenue passengers).<sup>41</sup> Family assistance legislation does not provide additional detail regarding the contents of the passenger list; however, the Federal Family Assistance Frameworks for Aviation and Rail Passenger Disasters provide guidance on the format, file naming convention, and content.<sup>42</sup>

### **What does the federal family assistance legislation state regarding passenger list distribution?**

The federal family assistance legislation for air and rail passenger accidents specifies that the NTSB shall receive, upon request, the passenger list from the carrier involved in the accident.<sup>43</sup> The NTSB may share information on the list with the family of a passenger; or with

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<sup>38</sup> Revised August 1, 2024

<sup>39</sup> 49 U.S.C. §1136(b) and 49 U.S.C. §1139(b)(1).

<sup>40</sup> 49 U.S.C. §41113(b)(4); 49 U.S.C. §41313(c)(4); and 49 U.S.C. §24316(b)(1).

<sup>41</sup> 49 U.S.C. §1136(h)(3) and 49 U.S.C. §1139(h)(4).

<sup>42</sup> [Federal Family Assistance Framework for Aviation Disasters](#) and Federal Family Assistance Framework for Rail Passenger Disasters.

<sup>43</sup> 49 U.S.C. §1136(d)(1), 49 U.S.C. §1139(d)(1).

a local, Tribal, State, or Federal agency responsible for determining the whereabouts or welfare of a passenger. These agencies may not release information from the passenger list obtained from the NTSB without express permission from the NTSB. These agencies may release this information without obtaining permission from the NTSB if the information was lawfully obtained through other means. The legislation allows the NTSB's designated organization, which is the American Red Cross (Red Cross), to request the passenger list from the carrier. The Red Cross may not release to any person information on a passenger list but may provide information on the list about a passenger to the family of the passenger, to the extent the Red Cross considers appropriate<sup>44</sup> and in coordination with the NTSB and Carrier.

### **How should the jurisdiction responsible for victim accounting request information from the passenger list?**

Local, Tribal, State, or Federal agencies that have direct responsibilities for victim accounting should submit requests for passenger list information to the NTSB Transportation Disaster Assistance Division (TDA). The NTSB will consider requests for passenger list information and provide relevant information to the agencies responsible for investigating missing persons (e.g., lead law enforcement agency), death investigation (i.e., the medicolegal authority), and healthcare community interface (e.g., emergency management) using a secure electronic platform.

Requests should be sent to [assistance@ntsb.gov](mailto:assistance@ntsb.gov) from the agency's email and include the following information:

- Agency Name, Primary Point of Contact (POC), and POC Title.
- POC contact information (agency email and cell phone number).
- Specific passenger list information requested (e.g., number of persons on-board, names, etc.).
- Agency and POC role in victim accounting process, and a brief justification for the request.
- An assurance that any passenger list information provided will not be publicly disclosed, and that the agency will obtain express authority from the NTSB before sharing information with other response agencies.

This guidance does not prevent carriers from sharing passenger list information with agencies other than the NTSB, particularly during the life safety phase (e.g., fire/rescue). Carriers shall not be liable for damages in any action brought in a Federal or State court resulting from providing passenger list information pursuant to their family assistance response plans, unless such liability was caused by conduct of the carrier which was grossly negligent or which constituted intentional misconduct.<sup>45</sup> Carriers should provide the NTSB with the requesting agency name, POC information, the specific passenger list information shared, and the date/time of dissemination, as soon as possible. Carriers should also notify the NTSB when requests are denied. The NTSB will maintain and

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<sup>44</sup> 49 U.S.C. §1136(d)(2) and 49 U.S.C. §1139(d)(2)

<sup>45</sup> 49 U.S.C. §41113(d), 49 U.S.C. §41313(e), 49 U.S.C. §24316(e)

provide similar information to the carrier.

**Additional considerations for the response community (i.e., local/state agencies, airports, and hospitals):**

- Only local, Tribal, State, and Federal agencies with direct responsibilities for victim accounting should submit requests to the NTSB for passenger list information to minimize duplicative or unwarranted requests.
- Information needs vary by agency mission and phase of the MCI response. For example, during the immediate life safety phase, fire/EMS assets responding to the scene need to know the number of persons onboard the aircraft or train. Once accident survivors have been cleared from the scene, agencies responsible for victim accounting will require names and as needed, contact information for survivors and family members. Agencies should specify the information needed and their role in the response at the time of the request.
- Frontline carrier personnel may not have access to, or authority to share passenger list information. Requests will most likely need to be directed to the carrier's corporate/headquarters personnel for consideration.
- The information contained on a passenger list is sensitive because it contains Personally Identifiable Information and because family members of those onboard the aircraft or train may not yet be aware of their loved-one's involvement in the accident. While the carrier is responsible for notifying families of persons onboard that their loved-one may be involved in the accident,<sup>46</sup> the process takes time.
- Establish appropriate document control measures and ensure safeguards are in place to prevent public disclosure of the information contained on the passenger list. This information must not be released beyond agencies that have a direct operational role in victim accounting (i.e., public safety agencies). Agencies may not release information from the passenger list obtained from the NTSB without express permission from the NTSB.
- Be prepared to address questions from the NTSB regarding the role of the requesting agency in the victim accounting process, use of the data, and mechanisms to prevent public disclosure.
- Develop policies and procedures to share information about the whereabouts and welfare of victims with the NTSB, carrier, and the Red Cross. The NTSB, carrier, and the Red Cross are mandated by federal legislation to offer services and information to accident victims and their family members.

**Additional considerations for air and rail passenger carriers:**

- This guidance does not preclude NTSB investigative requests under Title 49 Code of Federal Regulations Part 831 for passenger list-related information.
- Develop procedures to consider requests from the response community for the passenger list and determine if appropriate information from the passenger list

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<sup>46</sup> 49 U.S.C. §41113(b)(2) and (3), 49 U.S.C. §41313(c)(2) and (3), and 49 U.S.C. §24316(b)(2) and (4).

should be shared with the requesting agency. Ensure that corporate and local (i.e. station) emergency response plans include these procedures and that carrier personnel are adequately trained to implement these procedures.

- Develop procedures to notify the NTSB TDA when information from the passenger list has been released to requesting agencies and when requests for information have been denied.
- Participate in local and state-level MCI response planning efforts within geographic areas of operation to develop an understanding of the overarching response and the victim accounting process. Identify key points of contact within the response community who will serve in a leadership role during an MCI victim accounting operation and who will likely request information from the passenger list. The NTSB will support carrier efforts to integrate into this process.

The response community and carriers are encouraged to contact the NTSB TDA (202-314-6290; [assistance@ntsb.gov](mailto:assistance@ntsb.gov)) during the preparedness phase to discuss the guidance offered in this document, and during the response phase to address requests for the passenger list/manifest.

This document supplants other NTSB guidance regarding distribution of the passenger list but is to be construed in conformity with 49 USC 1139, 49 USC 24316, and applicable federal regulations.

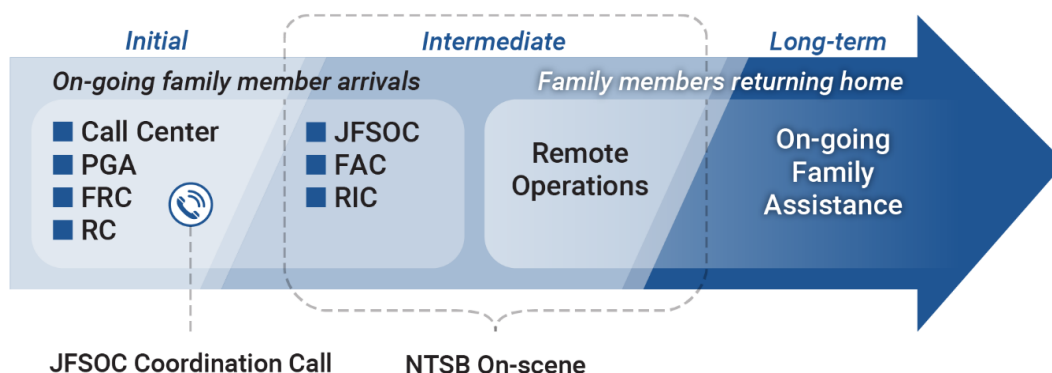
## Appendix 7 - Family Assistance Operations

### Overview

The ability to connect family members to information and resources in a timely and efficient manner is key to a successful family assistance operation. An effective family assistance operation makes every effort to provide consistent and equitable resources to those affected while ensuring that the unique circumstances of survivors and family members and the accident are taken into consideration.

The following figure illustrates the three phases of an on-scene family assistance operation. Depending on the accident circumstances, the timeline may vary.

**FIGURE 6.** NTSB Family Assistance Operations Timeline



### Pre-Launch Planning

The planning phase is extremely important to the success of the family assistance operation and is discussed throughout the Framework in various sections. This appendix focuses on the initial, intermediate, and long-term phases and elements of the on-scene family assistance operation until the transition to remote assistance operations.

### Call Centers

A call center is a centralized department or group that handles inbound and outbound calls from those interested in learning the whereabouts and wellbeing of their loved one(s). Call centers may be located either within an organization (for example, local law enforcement or carrier) or outsourced to another company that specializes in handling these types of calls.

As soon as they become aware that an accident has occurred, family members seek an official agency to obtain information or to report a loved one missing. In response to an MCI, there may be multiple call centers that collect and provide information.

The RPDFAA requires the carrier to create and publicize a reliable toll-free phone number within four hours after an accident occurs and to provide staff to handle calls from families of the passengers. The carrier is responsible for making notifications of involvement to family members as soon as it has verified that the passenger's name appears on the passenger list. Additionally, the carrier call center may be used to collect information from family and the public to follow up with them after verification is complete.

A missing persons call center (MPCC) may be established by the local response community to receive calls from members of the public wishing to report someone missing. Typically, missing persons reports are investigated by law enforcement personnel. The objectives of an MPCC are to collect basic information about the person reported missing, contact information for the caller, and information that will be used by law enforcement to assess the likelihood of involvement, allowing for investigative prioritization. Reconciliation of information between the carrier call center and the MPCC is important for victim accounting. It is also critical to establish who is managing and funding the MPCC if it has been established by the local jurisdiction. The NTSB will facilitate these conversations in the JFSOC.

#### Family Assistance Facilities

Depending on the circumstances of the accident and response, various types of facilities may be used to meet the needs of survivors and family members during the initial and intermediate phases of a family assistance operation. Some of these facilities are established by the local jurisdiction, some are created on an as-needed basis by those in the community who quickly identify a need, and others may be executed as part of the affected carrier's emergency response plan. The carrier and local jurisdiction should communicate through the EOC any established family assistance facilities and their purpose. Conversations should include who will be providing updates within the facility and what support is needed from other organizations.

Below is an overview of the types of facilities that are often incorporated into the family assistance operation following a 49 U.S.C. §1139 legislated rail passenger train accident. Each serves an important function related to providing survivors and families



with a safe, private place to receive information and access available support services. Each facility should be compliant with the ADA.

#### *Passenger Gathering Area*

A PGA is a temporary, secure, and private facility where surviving passengers are gathered, accounted for, and secondarily triaged to determine whether they have any injuries in need of medical treatment. Those without injuries or other needs often return home or continue with their travel. There may be a need to reunify survivors with family members awaiting their arrival at a Reunification Center (RC). A separate CGA for surviving crew may also be established by the carrier or local jurisdiction.

#### *Friends and Relatives Center*

An FRC is a temporary, secure, and private facility where family, friends, and relatives of a passenger are initially gathered. The purpose of this facility is to provide a location for family, friends, and relatives to receive initial information about the accident and their loved one's potential involvement, to provide information to assist the family assistance operation organizations in providing support services, and to provide an overview of what family members can expect moving forward. Minimal support services including basic needs, emotional support, and health services are often available here. As the family assistance operation becomes more established, the FRC is often closed or transitioned to an FAC. FRCs may also be established at satellite locations for the purposes of assisting families in remote locations (for example, those at arriving, departing, or connecting stations during travel connections).

#### *Reunification Center*

An RC is a temporary location where surviving passengers and family, friends, and relatives can be reunified following a rail passenger train accident. This is a location, separate from the FRC, to allow for the private reunification away from the families of passengers who may still be awaiting information about their loved one.

#### *Joint Family Support Operations Center*

The JFSOC is a central meeting location where organizations participating in the family assistance operation are brought together to monitor, plan,

coordinate, and execute a coordinated response aimed at maximizing the utilization of all available resources. If possible, the location of the JFSOC should be within the FAC (if established) or nearby. As with many emergency responses, the timely communication and sharing of information will be a challenge to a successful response. To increase effectiveness, a JFSOC location should be established early in the response and include daily meetings scheduled with participating organizations to monitor ongoing family support activities and requests. See [Appendix 8](#) for additional information.

### *Family Assistance Center*

A FAC is a secure, safe, and centralized facility established to provide ongoing support services, information, and resources to survivors and family members after the FRC and PGA are closed following an accident. The location of this facility may be determined by its proximity to the accident location, hospitals, or family assistance services being provided for the response. Carriers are not required by 49 U.S.C. §24316 to open a FAC, however, establishing a FAC is considered a best practice in a response to a mass fatality incident or MCI.

The FAC provides a dedicated location to ensure a coordinated family assistance operation among multiple organizations, including the carrier, involved in supporting response efforts. In a rail passenger train accident that meets the criteria of 49 U.S.C. §1139, only one FAC should be established. This will help ensure that the NTSB, the carrier, the Red Cross, and other support agencies are coordinating their resources and services, identifying gaps in service, and effectively providing information to survivors and families of passengers in a consistent manner. In many cases, carriers have plans established for securing a physical FAC location and logistical set-up; however, a virtual component may also be necessary to meet the needs of those who are unable or unwilling to travel to a FAC. See [Appendix 11 - Family Assistance Center](#) for additional information.

### *Remote Information Center*

RICs are additional facilities established to serve as extensions of the FAC to disseminate information to survivors and family members unable or unwilling to travel to the accident location or the FAC and to enable them to connect

with services in their local areas. A RIC may be a small information center or dedicated location within a hospital (such as a family information center) or other location where information about available services and support are disseminated.

#### Ongoing Family Assistance and Remote Operations

As the family assistance operation moves into the long-term phase, there is typically a transition from the FAC to ongoing or remote operations. This transition most commonly takes place when fatally injured passengers have been identified and returned to families, and families return home to plan funerals, memorials, or burial rituals. The transition may occur prior to completion of the entire identification process. FAC operations may begin to wind down when family members have gained confidence in the operation, believe they will remain informed of ongoing efforts after departing, and understand how they can access further assistance or information once they have returned home.

The key to a successful transition is communicating what survivors and family members can expect from the NTSB, carrier, and the Red Cross once the physical FAC closes. For example, the NTSB will communicate the investigative process and the next expected release of information as well as identify the TDA case manager assigned to serve as the primary POC to survivors and families for the NTSB investigation. The carrier will provide the process for the return of PE and contact information should survivors or family members need to reach them directly. In addition, the Red Cross will provide information on how surviving passengers and family members can access emotional support services in their community.

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## Appendix 8 – Joint Family Support Operations Center

### Definition, Purpose & Objectives

In the aftermath of an accident that meets 49 U.S.C. §1139 criteria, the NTSB establishes a JFSOC to coordinate the family assistance operation. The JFSOC is a central meeting location where participating organizations are brought together to monitor, plan, coordinate and execute a family assistance operation maximizing the utilization of all available resources. If possible, the location of the JFSOC should be within the FAC or nearby. Establishing the JFSOC within the FAC allows for continued situational awareness and monitoring of the facility to identify and address evolving needs and support for survivors and family members, along with addressing emergent issues that may arise, such as site visit planning.

The JFSOC is designed to address communication and information sharing challenges which may impede a successful response. The family assistance operation partners that typically participate in the JFSOC include but are not limited to; the NTSB, the carrier, the Red Cross, local or state government (for example, medicolegal authority, law enforcement, EOC personnel, hospital authorities, public health authorities), tribal government, and other federal agencies, as needed for the operation.

#### JFSOC Objectives:

- Facilitate effective communication and sharing of information among those involved in the family assistance operation.
- Monitor ongoing family support activities and track mission activities of each family assistance operation partner.
- Ensure efficient delivery of services by identifying needs, gaps, and duplication of efforts.
- Coordinate resource requests to address immediate and long-term needs, and plan for the transition from immediate to long-term service provision.

#### JFSOC Coordination Call

Coordination of the JFSOC begins within hours of the accident notification and confirmation of the legislated status. The NTSB TDA Chief or designated TDA representative will invite personnel listed above to participate in a JFSOC coordination call.

A key objective of the call is to open the lines of communication by bringing together the key family assistance operation partners. Additional objectives include

obtaining on-scene situational awareness and determining the date, time, location, and participants of the first on-scene JFSOC meeting.

During the JFSOC coordination call, the invited family assistance operation partners will be asked to provide their status at the time of the call, the status of their family assistance plan, and other areas of focus for their respective organization during this initial phase of the response. Although the discussion will vary based upon the nature of the accident, the family assistance response partners listed below should be prepared to discuss the following topics:

**Local family assistance response partner:** role and activation status of the agency, status of accident fatalities and/or survivors including injury severity, hospitals receiving survivors, patient transport updates, family assistance facilities established by local authorities and/or the carrier (such as FRC, PGA, RC), other family assistance operations currently underway, and an agency POC for family assistance.

**NTSB:** applicability of the federal family assistance legislation, composition of the NTSB launch team and home team (headquarter based) support, anticipated arrival time, base of operations, currently available accident information, status of federal partner agencies that have been activated in support of the response, testing of the carrier's toll-free number, points of contact for the NTSB including family assistance and media relations, and scheduling of the first JFSOC meeting in the accident location.

**Rail passenger carrier:** known information about the accident and passengers/crew; family assistance team status at the departure, arrival, diversion and other major stations along the route; station response team status; corporate response team status; activation of mutual aid; alliance partnerships; involvement of service providers; passenger list status; toll-free number status; family notification status; locations and travel status of family members; foreign national involvement (including language needs) or involvement of other special populations; family assistance facility status (such as FRC, PGA, FAC, JFSOC); and carrier points of contact for family assistance and media relations.

**Red Cross:** local region's activation status and initial accident response report summary; known information about accident location and local family assistance efforts; identity of Red Cross points of contact, if assigned; response plans for regional/division levels and other Red Cross services; current staff available for psychological, emotional, and spiritual care; staff on standby; known initial survivor or

family member interactions; activation of support partners or other disaster relief organizations; and other Red Cross points of contacts, as necessary, for family assistance operations.

#### JFSOC Facility Considerations

The JFSOC is intended as a meeting space for family assistance response partners to coordinate and direct the family assistance operation and is not for survivors or family members.

Efforts should be made to create a secure location within a FAC, if established. (Note that, the nature of the accident and public health concerns may require the use of a virtual JFSOC coordinated by the NTSB.) The carrier should locate and secure space to accommodate the JFSOC. It should be co-located or near the family assistance operation but away from gathering spaces for survivors and family members.

Space, technology, and communication access, and logistical support should be considered in the selection of the JFSOC space. To ensure the accessibility to, and involvement of, all relevant family assistance response partners, virtual or telephonic means of communication should be available in the space. If the carrier has difficulty securing space, the NTSB will coordinate with local authorities to determine the availability of a suitable location.

#### JFSOC Meetings

Several types of meetings will occur within the JFSOC to facilitate active communication and information sharing with all family assistance response partners. Status meetings are scheduled at least once a day, and likely more often during the initial days of a response. These meetings provide scheduled opportunities to gather decision-makers from each family assistance response partner to address the current areas of focus as they relate to the fundamental concerns of family members. The daily status report checklist (see [Appendix 10](#)) provides an example of the information that will be requested and tracked throughout the family assistance operation.

Beyond the daily status meetings, topical meetings may be scheduled to coordinate and direct specific issue areas, events, or requests from survivors and family members that require a significant amount of planning. Some of these include family briefing coordination, site visit planning, memorial events, assurance review(s), FAC transition and long-term support planning, and NTSB TDA departure/close out.

## Family Assistance Response Partner JFSOC Liaisons

Those involved in JFSOC meetings should include senior representatives from each responding organization with a defined role in the family assistance operation. The representatives participating in JFSOC meetings should have decision-making authority, or direct and immediate access to those with authority to make decisions, to allocate and access available resources as the need arises. Each representative represents the interests, activities, and available resources associated with their organization.

Depending on the size and scope of the response, additional individuals may be necessary to ensure coverage within the JFSOC. Ideally, the same person(s) should serve in this capacity for the length of the family assistance operation to ensure a consistent effort by personnel who understand the complex issues of the response and to ensure the best delivery of services and information to survivors and family members.

### JFSOC Roles and Associated Tasks

The following provides an overview of the roles and associated tasks as they relate to specific family assistance response partners identified under 49 U.S.C. §24316 and §1139. As previously discussed, each responding organization with a role in the family assistance operation should provide representation to the JFSOC. Depending upon the unique nature of the response and the resources available from all responding partners, it may be necessary for one individual to take on multiple roles or to delegate specific tasks to other individuals within their organization to support evolving family assistance operations.

#### *NTSB TDA chief*

- Serves as the NTSB-delegated representative for family assistance operations.
- Provides primary oversight of the NTSB family assistance operation. Serves as the primary TDA representative to the NTSB investigative team and external entities (such as government officials).
- Maintains ongoing communication with the NTSB JFSOC coordinator and administrative coordinator during the on-scene response operation.

#### *NTSB JFSOC coordinator*

- Serves as the direct POC to the affected rail passenger carrier's JFSOC liaison.
- Manages the day-to-day activities of the JFSOC.
  - Coordinates task assignments with other JFSOC liaisons.
  - Facilitates the exchange of information among JFSOC participants.



- Ensures that critical information is kept current and available.
  - Informs other JFSOC liaisons of significant operational developments.
- Schedules and facilitates daily and special circumstance JFSOC meetings.
- Schedules and coordinates family briefings with JFSOC liaisons.
- Facilitates family briefings, introduction of speakers, and question-and-answer sessions.

#### *NTSB JFSOC administrative coordinator*

- Provides direct support to and assists the NTSB JFSOC coordinator during day-to-day activities of the JFSOC.
- Maintains the master list of names, contact information, and locations of JFSOC liaisons and key family assistance personnel.
- Participates in JFSOC meetings to document organizational activities, response efforts, and assignments.
- Documents relevant information for the JFSOC daily status report.

#### *NTSB case manager*

- Serves as the primary NTSB point of contact for family members and survivors throughout the course of the NTSB investigation.
- Manages requests to the rail passenger carrier's JFSOC liaison for family member contact information and updates. Include NTSB JFSOC coordinator and rail passenger carrier's family assistance coordinator on request.

#### *Rail passenger carrier senior representative*

- Serves as the carrier's representative to the NTSB TDA chief regarding the carrier's family assistance response.
- Answers questions regarding the carrier's emergency response plan, alliance and partner organizations, service provider(s), available resources, and limits to family assistance support.
- Travels to various locations, such as the accident location, hospital, morgue, JFSOC, and FAC as necessary for the family assistance operation.
- Coordinates, prepares, and delivers the carrier's information during family briefings as required or coordinates participation by a carrier designee. (Carrier may choose to assign this responsibility to the carrier's family assistance coordinator.)

*Rail passenger carrier family assistance coordinator*

- Serves as the representative of the carrier regarding the day-to-day functions of the carrier's family assistance operation.
- Prepares information to be distributed to families of passengers regarding the carrier's specific resources (for example, services, points of contact).
- Ensures that resources are available to meet the needs of families of passengers, including supply acquisition when needed.
  - Manages the tracking of family members who have been notified of passenger's involvement, number of attempted notifications, and number of families for which contact information is unknown; families travelling to the accident locations, currently at the accident location, or at another location, and projected departures from the accident location. See [Appendix 10](#) for more information.
- Coordinates, prepares, and delivers the carrier's information during family briefings. (The carrier may choose to assign this responsibility to the carrier's senior representative).
- Addresses questions related to current and future support provided by the carrier.
- Assigns a primary POC to coordinate directly with the Red Cross Disaster Relief Operations Director to ensure that—
  - Families of passengers are aware of the family assistance services available from the Red Cross.
  - Requests for emotional, spiritual, psychological, and family care are fulfilled.
  - Adequate facility space is available for providing care.
  - Areas are established within the FAC for families of passengers to grieve privately.<sup>47</sup>
  - Space is available for on-site respite care for families with minors, if determined necessary.
  - Appropriate support is provided to address cultural diversity and access and functional needs.
- Coordinate with the NTSB hospital coordinator on the status of survivors in hospitals utilizing information provided by local government agencies, public safety organizations, and hospitals.

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<sup>47</sup> [49 U.S.C. §1139\(c\)\(2\)](#)

<sup>48</sup> [42 U.S.C. §12102](#)

- Coordinate with the presiding medicolegal agency regarding the release of remains.
  - Facilitate the exchange of contact information for the family of each passenger as needed.

#### *Rail passenger carrier JFSOC liaison*

- Remains available in the JFSOC for questions from responding agencies.
- Participates in all JFSOC daily status and special circumstance meetings and provides ongoing status updates on the status of family assistance activities. See [Appendix 10](#) for the JFSOC daily status report checklist.
- Coordinates and shares information among all JFSOC liaisons.
- Disseminates information within own organization, as appropriate.
- Maintains up-to-date information regarding the location and contact information for family assistance facilities, key organizational entities, and personnel.
- Provides ongoing updates during JFSOC meetings and ensures that the NTSB JFSOC administrative coordinator is aware of any changes.
- Maintains and updates daily plans and incident action plans.

#### *Red Cross Disaster Relief Operations Director*

- Serves as the primary on scene Red Cross representative for the Red Cross leadership team in the JFSOC regarding the Red Cross's family assistance response and reports to the National Red Cross Liaison.
- Serves as direct support to the Red Cross JFSOC liaison and ensures that Red Cross staff and volunteers assigned understand their roles and responsibilities.
- Ensures that a cost-accounting system is in place for potential reimbursement purposes.
- Coordinates directly with the carrier's primary POC to the Red Cross to address the following:
  - Survivor and family member requests for emotional, spiritual, psychological, and family care at the FAC or where they are located (such as hospital, home).
  - Adequate facility space is available for support services and staff at the FAC, if established, including a private place for families to grieve.
  - Use of carrier resources, to the maximum extent practicable, to provide services from Red Cross staff and volunteers.

- Ensures a plan to address spontaneous unaffiliated volunteers is activated as necessary.
- Ensures that a donation management plan is established with local organizations that handle donation processing, as necessary.
- Disseminates information within own organization, as appropriate.
- Remains available in the JFSOC for questions from responding agencies.
- Coordinates, prepares, and delivers information regarding Red Cross support services during family briefings or delegates this task to the Red Cross JFSOC liaison.

#### *Red Cross JFSOC liaison*

- Serves as the local representative for the Red Cross leadership team in the JFSOC and coordinates with the NTSB, carrier, and other JFSOC agency representatives to ensure collaboration and sharing of information.
- Ensures adequate Red Cross staff and volunteers are assigned to meet the needs of family members and survivors.
- Coordinates additional emotional, spiritual, psychological, and family care services and staffing to include partner disaster relief organization services, upon request.
- Coordinates and shares information among all JFSOC liaisons.
- Participates in all JFSOC daily status and special circumstance meetings and provides ongoing updates on the status of family assistance activities. See [Appendix 10](#) for the JFSOC daily status report checklist.
- Provides ongoing updates during JFSOC meetings and ensures that the NTSB JFSOC administrative coordinator is aware of significant operational updates.
- Maintains up-to-date information regarding support service requests, staffing, daily plans, and future planning.
- Ensures information is prepared for distribution to survivors and families regarding Red Cross support services (such as mental health, spiritual care, respite care for minors).
- Seeks support from the Red Cross Disaster Relief Operations Director, as necessary.

*Presiding medicolegal authority JFSOC liaison (as required)*

- Serves as the liaison for victim recovery and identification activities at the accident location, the morgue, the antemortem interview process, and the JFSOC.
- Updates the status of victim identification, including the numbers of those recovered, those positively identified, those whose NOK have been notified, and those whose human remains have been released to their families.
- Maintains and shares contact information for family members, as determined necessary and appropriate, for the provision of family assistance resources.
- Tracks and reports on the progress of antemortem interviews and antemortem data collection.
- Tracks and reports on custody of personal effects.
- Participates in daily JFSOC status meeting(s) and briefs participating organizations on the status of family support activities. See [Appendix 10](#) for the JFSOC daily status report checklist.
- Coordinates and shares information with all JFSOC liaisons.
- Disseminates information within own organization, as appropriate.
- Maintains up-to-date information regarding the location and contact information for family assistance facilities, key organizational entities, and personnel.
- Prepares information to be distributed to families of passengers regarding organization-specific resources (for example, services, points of contact).
- Coordinates, prepares, and delivers organization or agency's information during family briefings.
- Ensures that adequate staff is available to carry out family assistance tasks.

*Medical treatment facility JFSOC liaison (as required)*

- Serves as the liaison among hospitals that have received passengers regarding patients' locations, numbers, and general health status.
- Assists in determining key points of contact within hospitals to assist in the receipt of passenger and family member contact information.
- Coordinates with hospital staff to facilitate access for family members to remotely view family briefings.
- Participates in daily JFSOC status meeting(s) and briefs participating organizations about the status of family support activities.
- Coordinates and shares information with all JFSOC liaisons.

- Disseminates information within own organization, as appropriate.
- Maintains up-to-date information regarding the location and contact information for family assistance facilities, key organizational entities, and personnel.
- Provides ongoing updates during JFSOC meetings and ensures that the NTSB JFSOC administrative coordinator is aware of any changes.
- Ensures that adequate staff is available to perform family assistance tasks.

*DOS JFSOC liaison (as required)*

- Serves as the liaison between DOS and the JFSOC regarding the needs of foreign national passengers.
- Coordinates with appropriate embassies/consulates and foreign governments to facilitate the notification of foreign national involvement in an accident and communication with the NTSB, the Red Cross, and carrier.
- Monitors the status of foreign national fatalities and survivors within the United States and their families abroad, including travel status for those who choose to travel to the United States.
- Coordinates issues involving foreign passengers and the support they will need from the DOS, the associated embassy/consulate, and other participants in the JFSOC.
- Provides advice on cultural considerations.
- Addresses inquiries from foreign government officials.
- Serves as the sponsor for foreign consulate officials who have a need to participate in the JFSOC or using family assistance facilities.
- Participates in daily JFSOC status meetings and briefs participating organizations about the status of family support activities. See [Appendix 10](#) for the JFSOC daily status report checklist.
- Coordinates and shares information with all JFSOC liaisons.
- Disseminates information within own organization, as appropriate.
- Provides ongoing updates during JFSOC meetings and ensures that the NTSB JFSOC administrative coordinator is aware of any changes.
- Maintains a daily log of family support activities, requests, and resources available within their organization and adjusts as necessary.
- Prepares information to be distributed to families of passengers regarding organization-specific resources (for example, services, points of contact).
- Coordinates, prepares, and delivers organization or agency's information during family briefings.

- Ensures that adequate staff is available to perform family assistance tasks.

*Federal partner JFSOC liaison (as required)*

- Assists JFSOC participants in understanding the roles and responsibilities of their agency as they pertain to family assistance.
- Identifies assets, resources, and points of contact that can be used to support the family assistance operation in accordance with preestablished MOU/MOA.
- Participates in daily JFSOC status meetings and briefs participating organizations about the status of family support activities. See [Appendix 10](#) for the JFSOC daily status report checklist.
- Coordinates and shares information with all JFSOC liaisons.
- Disseminates information within own organization, as appropriate.
- Provides ongoing updates during JFSOC meetings and ensures that the NTSB JFSOC administrative coordinator has captured any changes.
- Maintains and updates daily plans, incident action plans and future operations.
- Maintains a daily log of family support activities, requests, and resources available within their organization and adjusts as necessary.
- Prepares information to be distributed to the families of passengers regarding organization-specific resources (for example, services, points of contact).
- Coordinates, prepares, and delivers organization or agency's information during family briefings.
- Ensures that adequate staff is available to perform family assistance tasks.

*State, local, tribal government JFSOC liaisons (as required)*

- Assist JFSOC participants in understanding local community structure and leadership.
- Identify local assets, resources, and points of contact that can be used to support the operation and share information during JFSOC meetings.
- Assist with coordination of issues of security for the FAC, lodging facilities, hospitals, morgue, other designated sensitive areas, and the families of passengers.
- Participate in daily JFSOC status meetings and brief participating organizations about the status of family support activities. See [Appendix 10](#) for the JFSOC daily status report checklist.
- Coordinate and share information with all JFSOC liaisons.
- Disseminate information within own organization, as appropriate.

- Maintain up-to-date information regarding the location and contact information for family assistance facilities, key organizational entities, and personnel.
- Provide ongoing updates during JFSOC meetings and ensure that the NTSB JFSOC administrative coordinator is aware of any changes.
- Maintain and update daily plans, incident action plans and future operations.
- Maintain a daily log including family support activities, requests, and resources available within their organization and adjust as necessary.
- Prepare information to be distributed to families of passengers regarding organization-specific resources (for example, services, points of contact).
- Coordinates, prepares, and delivers organization or agency's information during family briefings.
- Ensures that adequate staff is available to perform family assistance tasks.



## Appendix 9 – JFSOC Coordination Call Agenda (Sample)

### Objectives

The objectives of the JFSOC coordination call are to initiate an open line of communication among key family assistance operation stakeholders; obtain situational awareness regarding the status of the family assistance response during the initial phase; and organize the date, time, location, and participants for the first JFSOC meeting at the accident location. A JFSOC Coordination Call will be scheduled approximately 2-3 hours following notification to the carrier and the Red Cross that the accident meets criteria established under 49 U.S.C. §1139. The NTSB chief or TDA representative will facilitate the call. Although the participants in the coordination call will vary based on the nature of the accident response, at a minimum, the following agencies will be requested to join the call:

- The NTSB
- Carrier (partners and service providers, as needed)
- The Red Cross
- Local response agencies engaged in the family assistance operation (for example, OEM, first responders, hospitals, and healthcare coalitions, presiding medicolegal authority)
- State, tribal, and/or other federal agencies having a role in the response.

### Meeting Agenda

1. Introductions by response agencies including contact information:
  - a. Agency's POC during travel to accident location.
2. NTSB's legislated status determination.
3. Local response agency:
  - a. Status of accident fatalities and survivors.
  - b. Overview of injury severities.
  - c. Hospital transports: locations, numbers, points of contacts.
  - d. Current family assistance operations and involvement.
  - e. Local Chapter Red Cross status.
4. NTSB status:
  - a. Launch team composition, arrival time, lodging.
  - b. TDA launch and home team (headquarter based) status.
  - c. Carrier's toll-free number call verification reminder.

- d. Current investigative information.
  - e. Media Relations Division contact information.
  - f. Federal partner status.
5. Carrier status:
- a. Family assistance leadership status.
  - b. Family assistance team status.
  - c. Passenger list, crew composition and status of reconciliation.
  - d. Toll-free number activation and status.
  - e. Crew and passenger status.
  - f. Family notification process status.
  - g. Facilities status (such as FRC, PGA, CGA, FAC, JFSOC).
  - h. Service provider involvement (such as PE vendor, consultants).
  - i. Media Relations Division contact information.
6. Red Cross status:
- a. National NTSB liaison POC.
  - b. JFSOC liaison assignment status.
  - c. Available local/regional support services and local response status.
  - d. Available support services on standby.
7. Review of pending requests (data, resource needs) and responsible party; identification of immediate coordination needs among participants for report during first on-scene JFSOC meeting.
8. Meeting location and time of first on-scene JFSOC meeting.

## Appendix 10 – JFSOC Meeting Checklists

<b>JFSOC Initial Meeting Checklist</b>		
	Organization’s status, points of contact and JFSOC role.	<b>All response partners</b>
	Number, location(s), and duties of support personnel.	<b>All</b>
	Overview of investigative process, timelines, site condition, and other concerns.	<b>NTSB</b>
	Overview of passenger/crew information (numbers, nationalities, special populations).	<b>Carrier</b>
	Status of toll-free telephone number and level of activity.	<b>Carrier</b>
	Status of passenger list requests, including who has requested copies and concerns.	<b>Carrier</b>
	Status of family assistance operation: FRC/PGA/CGA/FAC/RIC, hospital locations, remote access to services plan; number of family members at FRC/PGA/FAC/hospital locations (currently/daily).	<b>Carrier</b>
	Family assistance team status, involvement, and status of family assistance service provider.	<b>Carrier</b>
	Review of current FAC set-up; what rooms have been assigned and what rooms are still needed for each response partner.	<b>Carrier</b>
	Status of notification of involvement: number of family groups notified, number for which notification was attempted, number still pending notification.	<b>Carrier</b>

	Crewmember family status, location, accommodations, plan for accessing services, and other concerns.	<b>Carrier</b>
	Family member travel updates: number and locations (for example, home, family hotel, hospital[s], other) of family members in the accident location; number of family members expected to arrive within the next 24 hours, number of family members not expected to travel, and their location(s).	<b>Carrier</b>
	Number of survivors and family members provided hotel accommodations.	<b>Carrier</b>
	Number of survivor and family member requests coordinated with the Red Cross by rail passenger carrier family assistance teams.	<b>Carrier</b>
	Status of PE management process (process overview, timeline, communications plan, role of third party, complications, retention plan).	<b>Carrier</b>
	Number of requests received for support by survivors and family members and/or rail passenger carrier Family Assistance Teams at the FAC, at hospitals, and those not traveling within the last 24 hours.	<b>Red Cross</b>
	Total number of survivors and family members provided services.	<b>Red Cross</b>
	Status update on current Red Cross staffing and services being provided at accident location/FRC/FAC/ hospitals/other locations.	<b>Red Cross</b>
	Status update on current staffing and services provided by other partner disaster relief or support services organization(s) being provided at accident location/FRC/FAC/ hospitals/other location.	<b>Red Cross</b>

	Review of resource needs (additional service rooms or staff; private room for families; workspace; break area for volunteers) and availability of potential support services (respite care for minors; donation management).	<b>Red Cross</b>
	Status of community memorial events or services.	<b>Red Cross</b>
	Status and location of Red Cross region(s) involved outside the accident location.	<b>Red Cross</b>
	Status of response (EOC activation; types of support operations; ESF-8 activity [if applicable]; local agency involvement, and other considerations).	<b>Local and/or State OEM</b>
	Status of victim recovery and identification efforts.	<b>Medicolegal</b>
	Status of antemortem data collection, interviews, and DNA reference sample collection.	<b>Medicolegal</b>
	Number of families notified of positive identification.	<b>Medicolegal</b>
	Status of the release of human remains.	<b>Medicolegal</b>
	Update on assistance provided to families of foreign nationals.	<b>DOS</b>
	Anticipated challenges, gaps, and duplication of services during the next operational period.	<b>All</b>
	Summary/remarks on current daily activities.	<b>All</b>
	Summary/remarks on activities scheduled for the next operational period.	<b>All</b>
	Review of coordination activities needed prior to next JFSOC meeting.	<b>All</b>
	Exit strategy (estimated timeline; transition to remote support, anticipated challenges, and related issues).	<b>All</b>

<b>JFSOC Daily Meeting Checklist</b>		
	NTSB status update, investigative update, current priorities.	<b>NTSB</b>
	Family member travel updates: number and locations of family members in the accident location; number of family members expected to arrive within the next 24 hours, number of family members expected to depart within the next 24 hours, number of family members not expected to travel.	<b>Carrier</b>
	Number of family members at the FRC/PGA/CGA/FAC/RIC other family assistance locations (currently/daily).	<b>Carrier</b>
	Number of family member requests coordinated with the Red Cross.	<b>Carrier</b>
	Status of PE management.	<b>Carrier</b>
	Number of requests received for support by survivors, family members and/or Rail Passenger Carrier Family Assistance Teams at the FAC, at hospitals, and those not traveling within the last 24 hours.	<b>Red Cross</b>
	Total number of survivors and family members provided services.	<b>Red Cross</b>
	Status update on current Red Cross staffing and services being provided at accident location/FRC/PGA/CGA/FAC/ hospitals/other locations.	<b>Red Cross</b>
	Status update on current staffing and services provided by other partner disaster relief or support services organization(s) being provided at accident location/FRC/FAC/ hospitals/other locations.	<b>Red Cross</b>
	Review of resource needs (additional service rooms or staffing) and additional support service needs and availability (respite care for minors, donation management).	<b>Red Cross</b>
	Status of community memorial events or services.	<b>Red Cross</b>
	Status and location of Red Cross region(s) involved outside the accident location.	<b>Red Cross</b>
	Status of victim recovery and identification efforts.	<b>Medicolegal</b>

	Status of antemortem data collection, interviews, and DNA reference sample collection.	<b>Medicolegal</b>
	Number of families notified of positive identification.	<b>Medicolegal</b>
	Status of the release of human remains.	<b>Medicolegal</b>
	Update on assistance provided to families of foreign nationals.	<b>DOS</b>
	Issues to report from the overnight operational period and/or yesterday.	<b>All</b>
	Successes, challenges, needs, gaps, duplication of services, during the previous operational period.	<b>All</b>
	Summary/Remarks on current daily activities.	<b>All</b>
	Anticipated challenges, gaps, duplication of services during the next operational period.	<b>All</b>
	Discussion of site visit; safety, NTSB investigator-in-charge support, timing, and other considerations. See <a href="#">Appendix 16</a> for the site visit JFSOC meeting checklist.	<b>All</b>
	Exit strategy (for example, estimated timeline, transition to remote support update, challenges).	<b>All</b>

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## Appendix 11 – Family Assistance Center

### Definition & Purpose

The FAC is a secure, safe, and centralized facility that provides ongoing support services, information, and resources to survivors and family members, typically after an FRC or PGA closes. Historically, FAC operations addressed mass fatality incidents focusing on families of deceased victims; however, FAC operations have evolved to address MCIs involving survivors, and should be an important part of family assistance response planning. Carriers are not required by 49 U.S.C. §24316 to establish a FAC; however, a FAC provides a dedicated location to ensure a coordinated family assistance response among multiple organizations. In an accident that meets the criteria of 49 U.S.C. §1139, there should only be one FAC established. This will help ensure that the NTSB, the carrier, the Red Cross, and other support agencies are coordinating resources and services together, identifying gaps in service, and effectively providing information to survivors and families of passengers in a consistent manner. In many cases, carriers have FAC plans established for securing a location and logistical setup; however, a virtual component may be necessary to meet the needs of those who are unable or unwilling to travel to a FAC.

Although a FAC is not mandated by law, it has become an MCI best practice. If a FAC is determined necessary for the response, the carrier should plan on securing a facility near the accident site but not overlooking the scene. In the event of an overwater loss, a discussion about the FAC location will take place during the JFSOC coordination call. Factors to be considered in an overwater loss are proximity to departure and arrival and proximity to nearest municipality with infrastructure that can support a family assistance operation.

The FAC facility should provide adequate space for family members to receive support services, resources, family briefings, and basic needs. If possible, it is best to secure a facility that allows for or is nearby overnight accommodations for family members. The carrier should also consider adequate space to house the family assistance operations (such as the JFSOC, FAC staff break rooms, and operations rooms). See [Appendix 12](#) for a sample FAC floor plan.

## FAC Functions

The FAC is established to meet and support the immediate and short-term needs of survivors and family members. Several critical functions will take place in the FAC, and coordination among all agencies involved in FAC operations is essential in accomplishing these functions. These critical functions include the following:

- Providing safety, security, and basic needs, including food and beverages, health services, and the badging of staff and family members.
- Providing information on NTSB daily family briefings, death notifications, and the victim recovery and identification process.
- Providing access to resources available through the carrier, including travel and lodging, PE processing, and financial assistance.
- Providing access to emotional, psychological, spiritual, and family care services available through the Red Cross or other relief organizations, including mental health providers, support referrals, and respite care for minors.
- Prioritizing reunification efforts through—
  - Hospital or healthcare interface, including patient tracking, hospital coordination, and inclusion into the larger family assistance operation.
  - Victim recovery and identification, including antemortem interviews and DNA collection by the presiding medicolegal authority, death notifications, and the return of human remains.

## Location & Facility

Ideally, the FAC should be nearby but not within view or walking distance of the accident location. The FAC provides easy access to on-site services and amenities and must be compliant with the ADA.<sup>48</sup> At minimum, consideration should be given to a facility that provides a wide range of amenities and has multiple meeting rooms, a large ballroom or conference room, up-to-date information technology infrastructure, and food and beverage or kitchen services.

Arrangements for a FAC should be coordinated by the carrier in consultation with the NTSB. This requires awareness of the local jurisdiction's plans and current status. In addition, the JFSOC will be established within or near the FAC to allow for close coordination among all the family assistance response partners.

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<sup>48</sup> [42 U.S.C. §12102](#)

If available, a hotel can typically address the critical functions of a FAC in a central location and may also provide access to lodging for survivors and family members, if necessary. If possible, FAC facilities should be identified ahead of time. Carriers may choose to identify hotels ahead of time and work with hotel management in advance. For example, if adequate space is not available, the carrier may choose to discuss with hotels the possibility of relocating current guests to other facilities to accommodate survivors and family members.

When preselecting a FAC facility, consideration should be given to the possible duration of the family assistance operation and the maximum length of availability the facility can provide. This will prevent closing the FAC prematurely and will allow families to stay at a single location for an extended period without risk of being moved. Carriers should clearly communicate with families how long they intend to support a family assistance operation (for example, until shortly after all human remains are transported). The anticipated number of family members traveling to an area and choosing to visit the FAC may vary greatly from day to day. The number of family members per passenger may fluctuate between 5 and 10, depending upon the phase of the response (for example, human remains recovered, identifications made, human remains ready for transport for memorial or funeral services).

Family members will want to access the FAC unfettered by the media or onlookers. Restricting access to the areas (such as parking lots, side streets, parks) surrounding the FAC facility may not be possible; however, efforts should be made to work with hotel or facility management, security, or local law enforcement to determine what options are available to reduce interactions as families arrive or depart the FAC. Media and unsolicited attorneys are not permitted inside the FAC. The media will be provided separate briefings by the NTSB. For survivors or families who retain legal representation, these attorneys or legal representatives are also not permitted in the FAC and related family assistance activities (such as family briefings). Attorneys are also restricted from approaching other survivors or family members for 45 days following the accident. See [Appendix 12](#) for a FAC sample layout.

### Virtual FAC Operations

Virtual FAC operations may be necessary for survivors or family members unable to travel to a physical FAC at the accident location. Through the JFSOC, family assistance response partners will evaluate the need for virtual operations, the extent to which they can be provided, and the virtual technology available to support this effort. Examples of possible virtual resources may include a hybrid family briefing provided in person at the

FAC and simultaneously made available virtually for survivors and family members to attend from their current locations (for example, at home or in a hospital). A FAC website may be established to provide online access to the same information and resources available in the FAC's support service area. Development of this website will be discussed during JFSOC meetings.

### Demobilization

During JFSOC meetings, family assistance response partners should plan the demobilization of the FAC early in the operation to help survivors and families set realistic expectations of how long the facility and in-person services will remain operational. Early planning will also help response partners prepare for demobilizing their own on-scene operations and transition to remote and long-term operations, as necessary.

There may be several factors to consider when planning to demobilize the FAC. Family members are most likely to leave the FAC when their loved one has been identified and they can return home to begin planning funeral or burial rituals or when they are notified that the identification process will continue for an extended period, and they will be contacted directly when the process is complete. Should this occur, families will be contacted at home regarding positive identifications made after the FAC closes. As a reminder, the intermediate phase and associated FAC operations are focused on providing short-term services and information until survivors and families depart. As part of their demobilization, response partners should provide contact information to survivors and family members to access information and resources once the operations transition to the long-term phase.

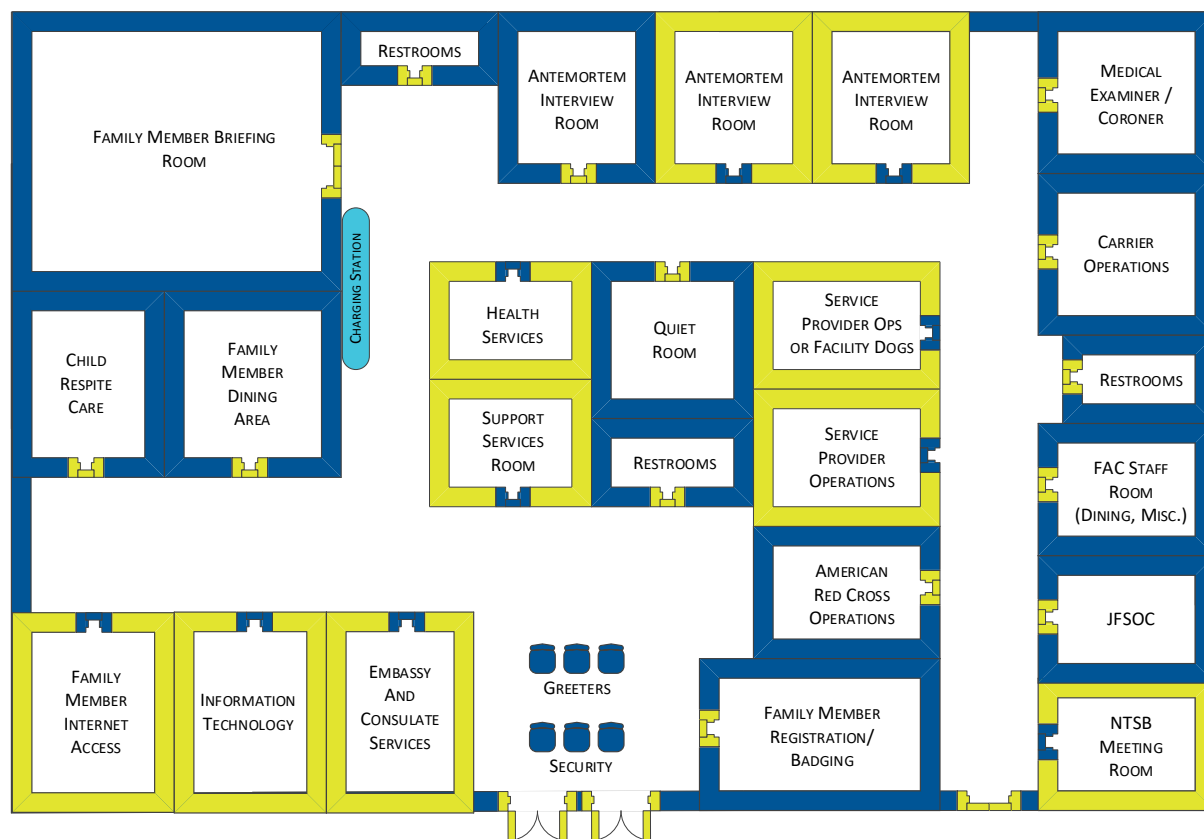
A decision about the NTSB TDA's departure from the accident location will be made in the JFSOC and will depend on multiple factors, including the status of the on-scene work involved in the NTSB investigation and NTSB launch team (such as Board member, media relations, and government affairs) departures from the accident location. Once NTSB on-scene media briefings cease and the documentation and fact-gathering efforts by the NTSB investigative team begin to conclude, the NTSB TDA will transition to remote communications with survivors and family concerning investigative updates and information, ending on-scene family briefings facilitated by the TDA team, and initiating their departure from the accident location.

The departure of NTSB TDA does not conclude the family assistance operation. Response partners, including the carrier and the Red Cross, will continue coordinating efforts with NTSB TDA to address ongoing assistance to survivors and family members as the intermediate phase of the family assistance operation transitions to the long-term phase and demobilization of the FAC.

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## Appendix 12 - FAC Layout (Sample)

POSSIBLE FAMILY ASSISTANCE CENTER (FAC) LAYOUT\*



\* THIS DIAGRAM IS A SCHEMATIC. THESE ARE OPERATIONAL/SERVICE PROVISION AREAS NOT DRAWN TO SIZE OR MEANT TO INDICATE LOCATION. SPECIFIC FAC LAYOUT WILL BE BASED ON THE PHYSICAL FACILITY. \*

\* AREAS HIGHLIGHTED IN BLUE ARE CRITICAL AREAS THAT SHOULD BE CONSIDERED WHEN DETERMINING THE LAYOUT OF A FAMILY ASSISTANCE CENTER. \*

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## Appendix 13 – Family Briefings

During the intermediate phase of the family assistance operation, the NTSB TDA will facilitate family briefings to ensure a consistent, coordinated message from family assistance response partners to survivors and family members. The focus of briefings is on providing official information about search, rescue/recovery, victim identification, and other activities to include the NTSB’s investigation, to the extent possible.

Those selected to brief on behalf of their organization should be effective communicators, be experienced with crisis communications, and have good listening skills. It is recommended that these briefers be senior-level officials within their organization or a subject matter expert on the topic being discussed. Each briefer is expected to participate in all family briefing planning meetings.

Briefers will also be expected to debrief together in the JFSOC immediately following the family briefing to address issues, follow up requests or needs, ensure that questions were answered by the appropriate organization, and make any needed corrections or updates prior to the next briefings.

NTSB-facilitated briefings should be provided to survivors and family members at least once daily, and more often as deemed necessary. Briefings should be held at the same time each day and notice of upcoming meetings should be communicated as soon as possible to survivors and families. In the event of a change to the briefing schedule or other information associated with the event, it is important to consider the most effective form of communication (such as SMS messaging, email, phone calls) to deliver updates on short notice.

Briefings should include adequate time after each presentation for survivors and family members to ask questions. A moderated conference bridge should be used for sessions with remote tele- and/or video conferencing to ensure that all questions from remote attendees are heard and addressed. The time allotment scheduled for questions and answers must be long enough to accommodate the number of questions that may be asked but must consider the needs of briefers that have an active and ongoing role in the site response (such as fire and rescue responders and the medicolegal authority representative). An agenda should be made available to survivors and family members once it has been finalized in the JFSOC. Agendas should include the list of briefers in the order they will present, their organization, and title. Providing an agenda will help inform survivors and family members about information being given during the briefing, who

will provide that information, and where to direct any questions they have. Questions should be addressed by the organization's briefer responsible for the item or topic, and briefers should delegate questions as needed to the appropriate organization involved in the family briefing. Survivors and family members should also be made aware of any other organizations in attendance that are not identified on the agenda.

## Family Briefing Planning Meeting

The NTSB TDA will facilitate a JFSOC meeting before each family briefing to determine the agenda and order of briefers. The duration of briefings vary; however, a briefing can last up to 2-3 hours or longer, depending on multiple factors, such as the number of attendees and questions, status of on-scene recovery work or investigation, or use of interpretation services, if needed.

### Briefing Agenda (Sample)

A typical family briefing agenda may include –

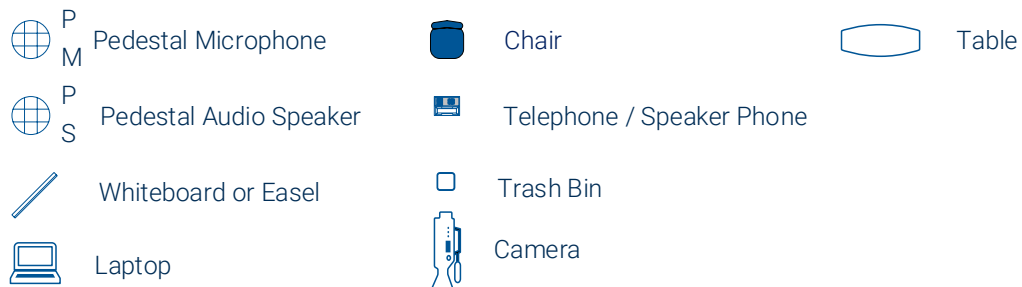
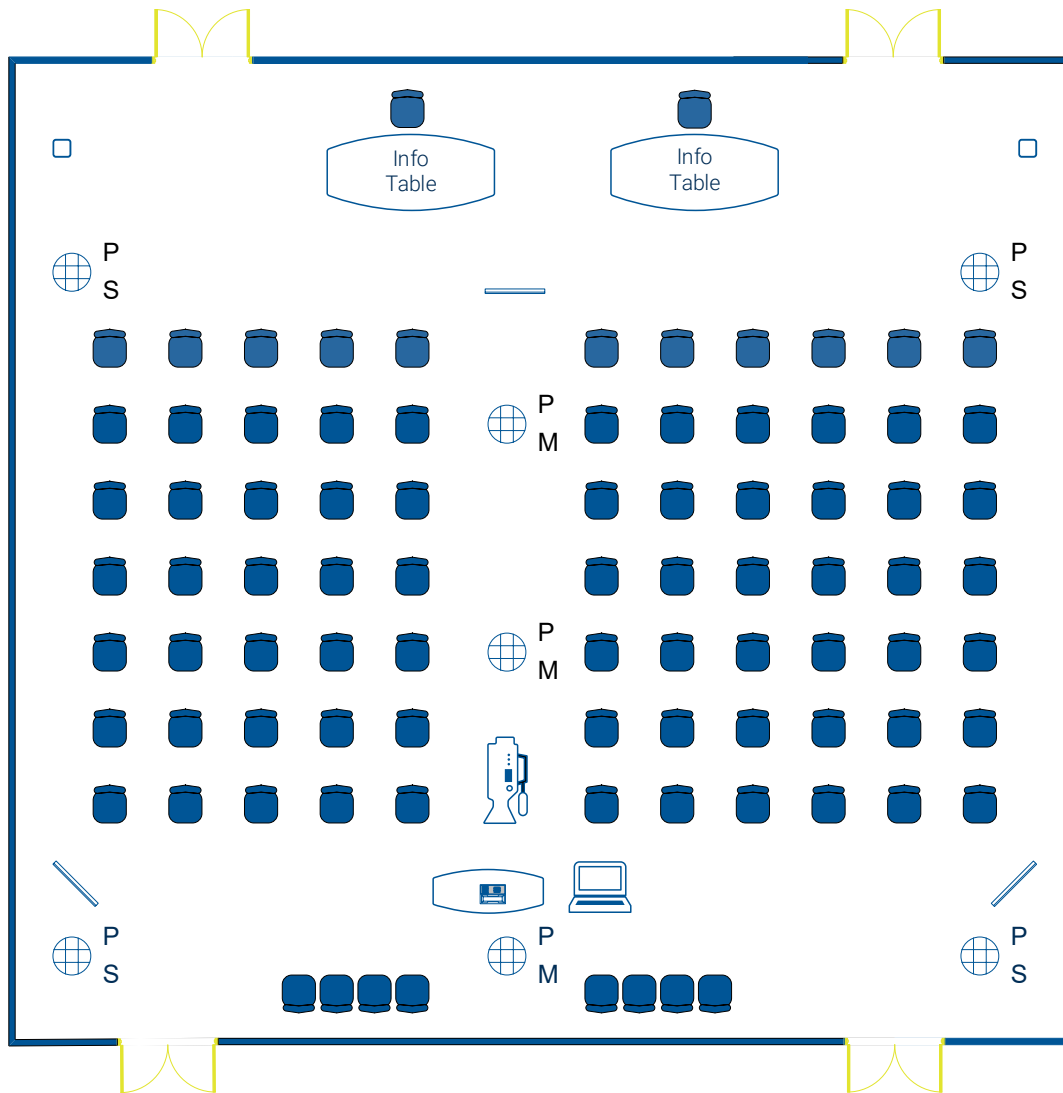
- Opening statement, review of agenda:
  - Date and time of briefings.
  - Safety orientation (evacuation, exits, AEDs) and housekeeping items.
- Introduction of each briefer.
- Briefing topics (question-and-answer session after each).
  - Status of search and recovery operations (if needed).
  - Status of medicolegal process (such as status of identification).
  - Status of investigation.
  - Status of PE management.
  - Available support services (for example, travel, financial, emotional care, childcare, legal services).
- Planned events (such as incident site visit, community memorial events).
- Closing statement; location and time of next briefing.

Attendance at family briefings is tightly controlled and limited. Those not allowed into the FAC, such as media, members of the public, and attorneys, will not be allowed to attend family briefings, neither in person nor remotely. If space is limited in the briefing room, survivors and family members may be asked to select a single representative or a limited number of representatives to attend in person for their family group, and additional family members may be encouraged to attend remotely.

Only briefers and a limited number of senior representatives from each organization should attend family briefings. Family briefings are not intended for carrier assistance team members, Red Cross volunteers, or others staffing the FAC. Support services and staffing needs during a family briefing will be determined ahead of time in the JFSOC and coordinated through each JFSOC liaison. Those staffing the FAC should use the family briefing time as an opportunity to rest, call home, eat, or handle personal tasks. Senior representatives present in the family briefing may provide an update to their organization's staff, as deemed appropriate, following the briefing.

The date and time for the final official NTSB-facilitated family briefing should be determined during a JFSOC meeting. Survivors and family members should be notified as soon as possible in advance of the final briefing's occurrence. The final briefing is a critical opportunity to provide survivors and families with plans and expectations for demobilizing the FAC provisioning of in-person services and transitioning to long-term and remote support and communication. This is also an opportunity to provide survivors and family members contact information that will assist them in requesting available ongoing support and information after they depart.

## Family Briefing Room Layout (Sample)



## Appendix 14 - Victim Accounting

### What is Victim Accounting?

Accounting for passengers and other victims involved in a rail passenger train accident is an important step in the reunification process. Upon learning that a loved one was involved in an accident, family members will often want to go to the passenger's last known location. To be able to report where the passenger is in an accurate and timely manner and to facilitate reunification, the NTSB; the carrier; the Red Cross; and local, State, Tribal, and Federal response agencies will need to coordinate with one another to answer two questions: Who was aboard and where are they located?

**Who was aboard?** To determine who was aboard the train at the time of the accident, the local response community will require input from the carrier. The passenger list serves as the most immediate form of information available regarding the identities of those aboard the train. Knowing who was aboard provides a starting place for the victim accounting process. The jurisdiction where the accident occurred is ultimately responsible for accounting for all fatalities and survivors of the MCI; however, the process requires collaboration and sharing of information between the rail passenger carrier involved in the accident and agencies at the local, Tribal, State, and Federal level. These agencies include office of emergency management (for purposes of this document, the term *OEM* includes emergency management agencies and emergency management offices), fire departments, emergency medical services (EMS), law enforcement, medicolegal authorities (medical examiner/coroner), public health authorities, and hospitals that have received patients. Carriers are essential in this process and hold critical information—the passenger list—that serves as the foundation for the victim accounting process. It is important for carriers to develop an understanding of the mass casualty response and develop a process to consider requests for the passenger list. Carriers should be prepared to provide information from the passenger list with relevant agencies particularly during the life safety (fire/rescue) phase of the response. The NTSB Guidance (see [Appendix 6](#)) does not obligate carriers to provide the passenger list to any agency or organization beyond what is required by relevant federal, state, or local statute.

Additionally, based on the circumstances of the accident, there may be a need to account for victims affected by the accident who were not aboard the train at the time of

the accident.<sup>49</sup> As their names will not appear on the passenger list, identifying and locating additional victims will require coordination among all the response partners. It will be important to locate and identify these victims to ensure they are provided equal access to important information and resources as required by 49 U.S.C. §1139 and §24316.

**Where are they located?** Identifying the location of passengers and other victims can be difficult depending on the circumstances of the accident and the nature of the injuries received. The victim accounting process involves a variety of agencies and varies from jurisdiction to jurisdiction. For example, the presiding medicolegal authority is responsible for identifying fatally injured passengers transported to the morgue; injured passengers may be treated on-scene by local first responders, transported to multiple medical facilities, or transport themselves to a medical treatment facility; uninjured passengers may evacuate to a nearby PGA/CGA without the need for medical treatment or may even leave the accident location without interfacing with any responding agency.

#### Managing Victim Location Data

Given the potential for numerous passengers aboard a rail passenger train and the multiple places where victims may be in the aftermath of an accident, coordination among all responding agencies must start from the beginning of the response effort. Ideally, the local jurisdiction designates a central coordinating agency to collect and consolidate all the data that is part of the victim accounting operation. This agency would then be responsible for coordinating the information received from first responders, hospitals, the carrier, and other key organizations, as well as ensuring that all response stakeholders receive the information they need to meet their responsibilities. Coordination efforts would begin at the EOC and transition to the JFSOC.

Agencies involved in the victim accounting process should look at all information sources to synthesize the data into a full accounting of the identities and location of all accident fatalities and survivors. Once this information is known, it should be communicated through the JFSOC with the NTSB; the carrier; the Red Cross; and other federal, state, tribal, and local government and support organizations. Information on the location of survivors should be communicated to family members by the carrier as soon as possible. All responding agencies will need to contribute information received from

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<sup>49</sup> [49 U.S.C. §24316\(b\)\(7\)](#)

various sources to notify family members and provide relevant, timely information and resources to survivors and family members.

The following information sources are used in the victim accounting and reunification process:

**Passenger List/Manifest:** The carrier is the source of the passenger list of names of the passengers and crew members aboard the train at the time of departure and along the route. This information is critical in clarifying who was aboard, as well as providing the initial data required to continue the accounting process and to organize family member contact information for a particular passenger. Given the importance of this information, the NTSB developed guidelines to assist carriers and the response community regarding both the distribution of the passenger list and the importance of maintaining control of the information contained on the list. See [Appendix 6](#) for more information on passenger list distribution.

**Friends and Relatives Centers and Passenger Gathering Area Records:** FRC records provide information to responding agencies about family members at a given location who may be associated with a passenger aboard the train. PGA records provide information to the responding agencies about which passengers evacuated the train and are accounted for in a safe gathering location.

**First Responder Data:** First responder data can come in the form of EMS run sheets, triage tags, and/or missing persons reports collected by fire, EMS, or law enforcement. Initial identification of injured passengers begins at the accident scene by first responders and is then fed into the larger victim accounting or patient-tracking process. EMS triages patients and transports them to the appropriate medical treatment facility based upon their status and injuries. In some cases, data includes EMS run sheets, transport records, or other triage data that accompanies the patient to the medical treatment facility. Many jurisdictions have patient-tracking systems initiated by EMS; the tracking concludes when the patient or fatality arrives at the medical treatment facility or the presiding medicolegal authority. Local law enforcement is responsible for taking missing persons reports from family members attempting to locate their loved ones. Information from these reports can be helpful in creating a complete victim list.

**Hospital Records:** As patients are received at medical treatment facilities, hospital staff either collect identity information from patients themselves or use other

means to assist in a presumptive identification of the patient. Hospital data may involve the upload of patient information into an existing electronic medical record system (for example, an online system or a tracking spreadsheet). Once patient information is collected and available, the hospital should work with the designated central coordinating agency to relay information for victim accounting and reunification through the JFSOC.

**Call Center Data:** Multiple call centers may be activated following a mass casualty or fatality incident to disseminate information to the affected population and collect information from potential family members of passengers. The local jurisdiction may activate a call center to quickly divert calls from 911 or other emergency service lines. As required by 49 U.S.C. §24316, the carrier will activate a toll-free number for family members of passengers to call seeking information about the accident and the response. Records collected from the various call centers can be helpful in identifying potential accident fatalities and survivors. If a call center is established by the local jurisdiction, family member contact information should be provided to the JFSOC so that the carrier may establish communication with families once a passenger's involvement in the accident has been confirmed.

**Decedent Identification:** The presiding medicolegal authority is responsible for the positive identification of decedents. Depending upon jurisdiction, the medicolegal authority or law enforcement may provide death notifications to the NOK. The medicolegal authority may rely on information collected by the local central coordinating agency to carry out these responsibilities.

### Major Rail Passenger Train Accident Victim Accounting - Best Practices

The amount of data regarding survivors, their location and status depends largely on the severity of the accident and the number of victims. Integration of data from several sources is required in a rail passenger train accident to assist with victim accounting and reunification. All individuals believed to be missing because of the accident must be accounted for as alive or among the deceased. This victim accounting process requires close communication and coordination between law enforcement (responsible for missing persons investigations) and the presiding medicolegal authority (responsible for medicolegal death investigations).

In a rail passenger train accident involving numerous injuries and fatalities, knowing the exact status of each passenger in the first hours is challenging. The affected



carrier is still attempting to gather information from the PGA and other locations and may not be able to immediately track passenger status or location. First responders [such as EMS, and law enforcement] may begin to collect passenger information. EMS responders create pre-hospital care reports that may be useful for tracking the status of passengers who have been treated and transported to hospitals or medical treatment facilities.

Local, state, or tribal law enforcement agencies in the jurisdiction where the accident occurred are responsible for initiating and completing a missing person investigation for those individuals reported (or otherwise believed to be) missing because of the accident. When someone is found alive in a local hospital or at home in another town, their name can be removed from the list of the reported missing/presumed dead. When the presiding medicolegal authority has positively identified an individual, their name can also be removed. In a mass fatality incident, the rail passenger carrier has a passenger list as an initial source of data sharing, and the presiding medicolegal authority responsible for victim recovery and identification attempts to confirm the identity of the fatalities as part of the medicolegal death investigation.

In an event resulting in fatalities and injuries, first responders (EMS and law enforcement) and hospitals receiving patients provide additional data needed to account for survivors. In an event resulting in some fatalities and injuries, uninjured survivors may have walked away from the accident location, increasing the challenge. Attempts should be made to account for uninjured survivors prior to their departure from the site. For example, law enforcement entities should obtain name and contact information for survivors who are not injured and plan to leave the area.

Additionally, station and carrier personnel should have a plan in place to account for uninjured survivors who are foreign nationals and should communicate the status of foreign nationals to the NTSB so that notification can be provided to DOS and relevant consulates. Accounting for uninjured survivors may require additional follow-up by either the carrier or law enforcement if these survivors have not been accounted for prior to departing from the accident location. The NTSB will support the victim accounting process by coordinating efforts among local, state, or tribal response agencies, including the presiding medicolegal authority, law enforcement, OEM, hospitals, and other emergency support personnel.

The Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA), Public Law 104-191, requires that hospitals restrict release of patient information.<sup>50</sup> The NTSB is a “public health authority” as defined under HIPAA, and the regulations promulgated by the DHHS to administer HIPAA. Consistent with 49 U.S.C. §1101-1155 and HIPAA, a “covered entity” may disclose protected health information to the NTSB for the purpose of the notification of family members. Individual hospitals may have internal policies that are more restrictive than those of HIPAA.

Some issues concerning victim accounting depend on the status of the victims:

1. *Fatalities*: The presiding medicolegal authority is responsible for recovering and identifying fatalities. Depending on the jurisdiction, local law enforcement or the medicolegal authority may be responsible for death notification. However, death notification cannot occur until a fatality has been identified.
2. *Injured, able to communicate, and hospitalized*: Hospitals gather contact information from affected individuals (patients). Patients may be able to notify family about their status and location; hospital staff may contact family members at a patient’s request.
3. *Injured, not able to communicate, and hospitalized*: Hospitals may have an internal process for cases of unidentified patients. However, in the chaos of numerous patients being admitted following an accident, the identification of patients may take a while to resolve. Information collected by the carrier (such as passenger list, call center records, notification of involvement call records) may assist hospitals in patient identification. Identifying these patients is a joint effort among law enforcement, the carrier, and the hospital. Information provided by other hospitals, and possibly by the presiding medicolegal authority, may help account for unidentified patients through the process of elimination.
4. *Non-injured*: Incident command and first response agencies capture contact information for those who wish to depart the accident scene.

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<sup>50</sup> HIPAA - [https://www.cdc.gov/php/php/resources/health-insurance-portability-and-accountability-act-of-1996-hipaa.html?CDC\\_AAref\\_Val=https://www.cdc.gov/php/publications/topic/hipaa.html](https://www.cdc.gov/php/php/resources/health-insurance-portability-and-accountability-act-of-1996-hipaa.html?CDC_AAref_Val=https://www.cdc.gov/php/publications/topic/hipaa.html)

## Appendix 15 – Victim Identification

### Definition and Importance

Victim identification is the method of identifying fatalities of a mass casualty or mass fatality incident. The NTSB engages with the presiding medicolegal authority as soon as practicable to establish a working relationship to understand the size and scope of the accident and the capabilities and resources of the jurisdiction, and to offer federal support.<sup>51</sup>

In general, five factors influence the complexity of the victim identification process and may influence the amount and type of resources requested to support the recovery and identification effort:

1. **The number of fatalities.** As the number of fatalities increases, so do the amount of time and resources needed to collect, manage, and analyze ante- and postmortem data.
2. **An open or closed victim population.** A closed population is when the number of victims and their names are known (for example, carrier accident with a passenger list). Conversely, an open population is one in which neither the number of victims decedents nor their names are known (for example, explosion in a public building). Accidents involving open victim populations require more time and resources to resolve because authorities must distinguish those *actually* missing from those *initially reported* missing. The antemortem data collection process can only begin once a victim is known to be missing.
3. **The condition of human remains.** It is generally much easier to recover and identify complete bodies than fragmented human remains. Other conditions that increase the amount of time and resources to identify the fatalities include commingling, thermal modification, and decomposition. When remains are fragmented, the reliance on DNA identification methods increases, in turn requiring more time and resources. In an open population accident with fragmented remains, the standard of care is to identify all remains, since the number and names of the dead are not known. With a closed population accident, the goal is to account for all potentially identifiable remains for each fatality. Often, this approach does not require analysis of all remains, just those that have a potential to be identified.

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<sup>51</sup> [49 U.S.C. §1139](#)

4. **Challenges in search and recovery operations.** Remote terrestrial or underwater recovery operations require specialized support and more time, thus delaying the collection of postmortem data.
5. **The availability of antemortem information.** Not all fatalities have easily accessible or available antemortem information. For example, a fatality who has never received dental care will not have dental records. Often, antemortem information is provided by the families of passengers. However, the absence of useful antemortem data, or the presence of incorrect data, will slow the victim identification process.

In coordination with the presiding medicolegal authority, the NTSB can request the following federal assets to assist in the victim recovery and identification effort:

- DMORT<sup>52</sup> to assist with fatality management and victim identification.
- FBI Disaster Victim Identification Team<sup>53</sup> to assist in obtaining fingerprint identifications.
- FBI ERT<sup>54</sup> or other FBI laboratory assets to assist with victim documentation operations.
- AFMES<sup>55</sup> to assist in medicolegal investigation issues. This includes AFMES resources and facilities including the AFDIL<sup>56</sup> and the DOD DNA Registry.<sup>57</sup>

The NTSB will work directly with the presiding medicolegal authority to determine the need for additional resources to support victim recovery and identification efforts.

Medicolegal authorities vary greatly in terms of staffing, facility size, capabilities, and resource networking. Some offices may be able to manage a rail passenger accident with existing staff and facilities, while other offices, particularly those in rural areas, may require assistance. To ensure adequate resources for the presiding medicolegal authority to meet their responsibilities, the NTSB will work with the local jurisdiction to coordinate the use of local, state, or tribal response teams along with the resources of various federal agencies.

The presiding medicolegal authority, with support from other responding organizations, has the following roles:

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<sup>52</sup> <https://dha.mil/AFMES>

<sup>53</sup> <https://www.fbi.gov/file-repository/handbook-of-forensic-services-pdf.pdf/view>

<sup>54</sup> <https://www.fbi.gov/how-we-investigate/science-and-technology>

<sup>55</sup> <https://dha.mil/AFMES>

<sup>56</sup> <https://dpaa-mil.sites.crmforce.mil/dpaaFamWebAFMES>

<sup>57</sup> <https://health.mil/Military-Health-Topics/Health-Readiness/AFMES/DoD-DNA-Registry?type=Fact+Sheets>

1. **Victim Recovery:** The physical location of the accident determines the resources required and the procedures employed for search and recovery operations. The personnel and equipment needed for scene documentation and recovery operations vary significantly depending on whether the accident occurred on land or over water. The NTSB has authority for the train wreckage, the presiding medicolegal authority has jurisdiction over the human remains and associated PE, and the carrier has responsibility for both associated and unassociated PE.

The costs related to victim recovery and identification can be high and are directly related to the number of fatalities, the condition of human remains, and the presiding medicolegal authority's policies regarding identification of remains. Typically, the carrier is responsible for reasonable costs of victim recovery and identification. However, the carrier is not required by legislation to pay for such costs. The costs of the victim recovery operation are normally shared among local, state, tribal, and federal agencies.

2. **Victim Identification:** The process of victim identification following a rail passenger train accident is thorough, deliberate, and based upon proven scientific methods. While there are best practice recommendations in the United States for accident victim identification, there are no enforceable national standards. The expectation by families and society at large is that all reasonable methods will be used to complete identifications in a timely and professional manner.

Biologically based methods are considered by courts of law as primary methods of positive identification. Other methods may result in a presumptive identification and may lead to a positive identification, which requires the comparison of antemortem records with samples collected from the human remains. Exact matches of unique biological characteristics found in both lead to a positive identification.

Biologically based methods include—

- Comparison of dental records and radiographs
- Comparison of fingerprints
- Comparison of bone structure in radiographs
- Comparison of healed fractures in radiographs
- Identification of unique medical features, such as implants/prosthetics
- Comparison of DNA

In a rail passenger train accident involving fragmented human remains, identification is followed by the process of reassociation of remains. Reassociation takes more time and is more complex than identification. Although a victim may be identified quickly using a single tooth, the ability to bring together the disassociated remains of

victims relies primarily on DNA. DNA identification involves comparing DNA samples of the deceased with either antemortem samples from biological relatives or a sample of DNA from the deceased obtained from clothing, a hairbrush, or a similar item containing skin or hair cells.

3. **Antemortem and Postmortem Information Collection:** The presiding medicolegal authority is responsible for interviewing families of fatalities and, if necessary, obtaining medical or dental record information. Depending on the condition of the human remains, families may be asked to provide the contact information of their loved one's dentist or doctor.

When activated, DMORT can also assist the presiding medicolegal authority with monitoring the status and receipt of requested antemortem records. This includes dental records, medical records, and DNA reference samples.

4. **Positive Identification and Death Notification:** Once a positive identification has been made, the presiding medicolegal authority, DMORT team member, or designee will provide an official death notification to the passenger's legal NOK, to decide on how and when the human remains will be returned for burial or disposition. Carriers may employ a service provider who will work with the medicolegal authority and family members to assist in the transfer from the medicolegal office or temporary morgue operation to final disposition. Family assistance team members may assist family members by making appointments for conversations with the medicolegal authority and service provider, if applicable.
5. **Disposition of Human Remains:** The medicolegal authority makes arrangements in coordination with the carrier for the release of human remains to the funeral home selected by the NOK. Victim's remains are transported from the morgue by a service provider contracted by the carrier, dependent upon the policy of the medicolegal authority, to the funeral home selected by the NOK. A POC for the funeral home selected by the NOK should be provided during the identification and death notification process.

Generally, victims' remains are released on an individual basis as they are identified. However, the medicolegal authority may choose to release unidentified remains as a group and will hold the release of those remains until family members can be consulted about disposition.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> [49 U.S.C. §24316\(b\)\(6\)](#)

Carrier family assistance team members should direct questions regarding victim recovery, identification, disposition of remains, and death certification to their team leader or equivalent. The team leader should notify their carrier JFSOC liaison to make the NTSB TDA and other JFSOC liaisons aware of any concerns raised by individual family members so they may be properly addressed with the relevant medicolegal representative.

Additionally, families should be reminded of available emotional, spiritual, and family care services from the Red Cross or other disaster relief organizations if additional support is desired during the victim identification and death notification process.

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## Appendix 16 – Requests For A Viewing Of The Accident Site

After a rail passenger train accident, it is common for survivors and families to request to see the site where the accident occurred. Early in the operation, during JFSOC meetings it is important to begin discussing the possibility of an accident site visit prior to receiving requests. An assessment should be done to identify any logistics and potential risks before such a request is granted, and safety should remain a top priority in the decision-making process. It is critical that all key stakeholders are involved in the decision, including those who may not be involved in ongoing JFSOC coordination efforts (such as station representatives, incident command, the NTSB investigative team). If a site visit is determined possible, the NTSB will facilitate the coordination of the event with relevant family assistance partners, including the carrier, the Red Cross, and applicable federal, state, tribal, and local agencies critical to planning efforts. The NTSB TDA will coordinate directly with the NTSB’s investigator-in-charge to ensure that the site visit does not impede the investigative process and that impacts to personnel working at the accident location are minimal. Planning efforts should address, but are not limited to these issues:

### Condition of Site

Site visits should not occur until the site is deemed safe for access by survivors and family members by the NTSB, the carrier, incident command agencies, or other relevant stakeholders (such as the property owner). A viewing area should be established to identify specific access boundaries; prevent direct access to wreckage, evidence, or other potential hazards; and reduce visitors’ risk of injury at the accident location. Site visits should not be scheduled until human remains, and clearly distinguishable PE, are removed from the site or from view in the area.

### Environmental Conditions

Environmental conditions or hazards may have a significant effect on site-visit planning and execution and may change suddenly and without notice. Conditions or hazards to consider and monitor prior to the site visit may include terrain, weather, temperature, wildlife, or contamination. Additional supplies, staff, equipment, and other resources may be needed to ensure the safety of those participating in the visit. Hazardous or poor conditions or other reasons may necessitate declining or cancellation of the site visit.

## Victim Populations

Those requesting the opportunity to attend a site visit may not be from the same victim population and may include family members of deceased passengers, surviving passengers and their families, ground victims, crew members, or others. It is important to discuss during the JFSOC coordination meetings whether a single site visit will be adequate or if more than one visit will be needed to address the range or number of potential attendees.

## Logistics, Resources, and Staffing

The potential number of survivors and family members requesting a site visit, along with the range of accident location considerations, directly impact logistics planning and management of resources for such an event. Resources that may need to be addressed or managed during a site visit include security, staff, transportation, fencing or barriers, restrooms, water, a temporary memorial stand, safety gear, and other necessary equipment or resources.

Transportation should be provided for all attendees to the site rather than allowing independent travel to the location, when possible.

A designated temporary memorial should be set up prior to the site visit to allow attendees to leave tributes, flowers, or other mementos when they arrive. Survivors and family members should be advised about the final disposition of any item left at the temporary memorial in advance of the event to ensure that items of significant value or sentiment are not left, as returning these items may not be possible.

Appropriate support services and staffing needs during a site visit are determined in advance in the JFSOC and coordinated through each JFSOC liaison. On-site support should include adequate mental health, spiritual care, and medical staffing. Site visits are not intended for carrier assistance team members, Red Cross volunteers, or FAC staff, and none of these should attend. Those staffing the FAC should use the site-visit time as an opportunity to rest, call home, eat, or handle personal tasks.

## Pre-Site Visit Family Briefing

Prior to a site visit, a family briefing should be scheduled dedicated to preparing and setting expectations for survivors and family members planning to attend the event.

This briefing will provide an opportunity to explain the site visit schedule, transportation, the amount of time they will have at the site, and any limitations (such as distance they will be from the wreckage, no video or photography policies, media exposure). The JFSOC team may elect to request that attendees sign a waiver in advance of the visit (this can take place during the pre-site visit family briefing. An example of a waiver is provided on the next page).

Upon return from a site visit to the FAC or other designated location, additional support services and staffing should be made available for those returning from the event. Requests for basic needs such as water, a quiet room, food, or rest should also be addressed.



## National Transportation Safety Board

### Site Visit Waiver (Sample)

I understand that participation in this wreckage viewing is limited and may be obtained only under the close supervision and control of authorized NTSB personnel. I acknowledge that the unauthorized and knowing alteration, destruction or removal of any wreckage or other materials is a federal crime. The NTSB prohibits unauthorized touching or manipulation of the wreckage as well as all photography, video, or audio recording during the wreckage viewing, and I hereby agree to abide by these prohibitions. Children under the age of 18 must be accompanied by their parent or legal guardian.

I understand that the wreckage viewing is being held on private property and the NTSB has received permission to use the property for this viewing by the property owner. I agree to remain in the designated areas identified for the wreckage viewing and will not access restricted areas or items on the property not involved with this viewing.

I agree to abide by the restrictions associated with the viewing, both those restrictions known at signing as well as any that the NTSB states during the viewing to ensure safety. I understand that I may be required to leave the viewing location if NTSB personnel determine that I am not abiding by these restrictions, that I am causing a disruption, hazard to myself, or hazard to others. I release the NTSB, the carrier, and the property owner from any and all injuries, physical and otherwise, and any associated liabilities that may arise from viewing the property and viewing the equipment wreckage. I also acknowledge by my signature below that, before entering the site, I have been made fully aware of the potential emotional and physical consequences of viewing the site and associated wreckage. I have been informed of emotional support services available from the American Red Cross and how to access them in the event I feel the need for such services during or following the site visit.

Visitor's Name (Please print): \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Attendee Signature or  
Parent/Legal Guardian for child attendee

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\*By submitting this form, you are confirming that you are the parent or legal guardian of the child attendee.



## National Transportation Safety Board

### Site Visit Sign-up Form (Sample)

Access to the [NTSB case #] site is limited and may be obtained only under the close supervision and control of authorized NTSB personnel.

The site may include wreckage or other items that could cause physical harm if touched. Visiting this site may have an emotional and psychological impact.

The alteration, destruction or removal of any wreckage, personal effects, or other materials associated with the site is a federal crime.

Photography, video, or audio recording during the site visit is prohibited.

Children under the age of 18 years must be accompanied by a parent or legal guardian.

Those seeking to participate in the site visit must complete the NTSB's Site Visit Waiver and provide their contact information below.

	Name	Telephone #	Email Address	Signed Waiver
1				
2				
3				
4				
5				
6				
7				
8				
9				
10				

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## Appendix 17 - Personal Effects Management

### Best Practices

Personal effects (PE) are items worn or carried with a person at the time of travel, including carry-on luggage or checked baggage, but not items shipped as cargo.

Below is guidance for the response community to effectively manage PE following rail passenger accidents that meet the criteria established under 49 U.S.C. §1139. Each event presents unique circumstances that will influence how this guidance is applied. The typical approach flows as follows:

#### **1. Identify key stakeholders and primary points of contact.**

- a. The presiding medicolegal jurisdiction (i.e. medical examiner/coroner) typically takes custody of PE physically associated with fatally injured passengers.
- b. The NTSB or law enforcement may take custody of PE that hold potential evidentiary significance.
- c. The rail passenger carrier is responsible for all other PE, per their legislated obligations. Carriers may collaborate with their insurance and contracted service providers to recover, clean, and return PE.
- d. Hospitals may have custody of PE transported with survivors.

#### **2. Define the scope of the PE management operation.**

- a. Participating organizations should plan for, monitor, and provide updates on the status of the PE management operation at the Joint Family Support Operations Center (JFSOC).
- b. Determine where PE are located (e.g., scene, medical examiner's office, hospitals), and define the recovery, chain of custody, claims and final disposition processes.
- c. Develop a communications strategy with survivors and family members that addresses key organizations involved in PE management, recovery of items from the scene, cleaning and cataloging, the claims process, and final disposition of unclaimed items.
- d. Ensure there is a long-term (i.e. post-scene) process for key stakeholders to communicate regarding ongoing PE management operations.

#### **3. Recovery of PE from the Scene.**

- a. Conduct an initial scene survey to:
  - Assess the condition and distribution of PE, the influence of terrain and other environmental factors.
  - Develop a search, documentation, and recovery strategy.

- Ideally, search an area twice the distance and depth from the location of the farthest and deepest PE item located using standard crime scene search methods.
- b. Conduct a final scene survey to ensure all reasonable recovery actions have been completed.
- c. The PE Survey Team should be comprised of:
  - NTSB staff
  - Law enforcement
  - Medical Examiner/Coroner
  - Property owner/representative
  - Rail passenger carrier, insurance, and contracted service provider (if applicable)

#### **4. Long-term monitoring of the scene.**

- a. Stakeholders should encourage the property owner to notify law enforcement if any PE are located after the on-scene phase has concluded.
  - Significant weather events, remediation activities, and other activities may result in additional PE becoming visible.
- b. Stakeholders should, in consultation with the property owner, develop a plan to survey the scene approximately 30-60 days before any anniversary or memorial events.
- c. The NTSB should be made aware of any PE or other items identified during these activities. The NTSB will coordinate with the appropriate stakeholders regarding the disposition of these items.

This guidance only applies if the NTSB is the lead federal investigative agency. Law enforcement will direct the PE management process if the crash is determined to have occurred because of an intentional act.

**Contact NTSB TDA.** Transportation Disaster Assistance staff can be reached at 202-314-6185 or at [assistance@ntsb.gov](mailto:assistance@ntsb.gov).



## Appendix 18 - Family Support Tasks by Role

### NTSB FSTs

1. Inform the carrier(s) involved in the rail passenger accident regarding the applicability of 49 U.S.C. §24316.
2. Inform the DOT regarding the applicability of 49 U.S.C. §24316.
3. Request from the carrier a copy of the passenger list, based on the best available information at the time of the request, with the names of the passengers who were aboard the train involved in the accident.
4. Coordinate with the carrier and local jurisdiction to help determine the appropriate agency(ies) to receive passenger list data when multiple requests are made to the carrier.
5. Share information on the passenger list with the family of a passenger; or with a local, Tribal, State, or Federal agency responsible for determining the whereabouts or welfare of a passenger.
  - 5.1. Inform the receiving agency they may not release information from the passenger list obtained from the NTSB without express permission from the NTSB.
  - 5.2. Provide the carrier with information about the requesting agency and what information from the list was shared.
  - 5.3. See [Appendix 6 - NTSB Guidance for Passenger List/Manifest Distribution & Control](#) for distribution guidance.
6. Designate and publicize the name and telephone number of a director of family support services (NTSB TDA chief or other TDA-appointed representative) to serve as a federal POC for the families of passengers involved in the accident and to act as a liaison between the carrier and the families of passengers. The NTSB's TDA Division addresses family members' requests for information regarding the agency's investigation, family assistance operations, and services provided by the carrier and the Red Cross.
7. Designate the Red Cross as the organization with the primary responsibility for coordinating emotional care and support for the families of passengers involved in an accident. Notify the Red Cross National Headquarters of the rail passenger train accident and their designation in accordance with 49 U.S.C. §1139.
8. Discuss with the presiding medicolegal authority the capabilities and resources of their office staff for conducting fatality identification based on the size and scale of the accident, including possible coordination with the AFDIL DNA identification Laboratory for DNA identification.

9. Ensure that family members receive the carrier’s toll-free number and are made aware of support services being provided by the carrier and the Red Cross.
10. Provide an NTSB toll-free number and email address to families of passengers for them to obtain information on the accident investigation and the victim identification and recovery process.
11. Organize and facilitate a JFSOC coordination call with the carrier, the Red Cross, and other supporting federal, state, tribal, and local agencies as needed to become aware of the family assistance operation and response status.
12. Encourage response organizations to share information about the whereabouts of fatalities and the whereabouts and welfare of survivors with the carrier, the Red Cross, and the NTSB as part of the victim accounting process.
13. Establish and maintain contact with families of passengers to keep them informed about support services, the accident investigation, and other accident investigation-related concerns including relevant NTSB public hearings and meetings.
14. Coordinate through the NTSB Media Relations Division regarding family assistance efforts.
15. Monitor open-source media to determine when the carrier’s toll-free number becomes publicly available:
  - 15.1. Publicize the carrier’s toll-free number through NTSB social media platforms.
  - 15.2. Call the carrier’s toll-free number to verify its operational status and to determine how information is being provided to callers seeking information.
  - 15.3. Advise family members of the carrier’s toll-free number. Notify the carrier POC of family contact information.
16. Maintain communication with the carrier to remain current regarding the status of family notification (for example, number of family groups notified, number for which notification was attempted, number still pending notification). See [Appendix 10](#) for additional information.
17. Establish a JFSOC based upon available space in or near the FAC. Invite representatives of the carrier’s family assistance response team, the Red Cross liaisons and other response organizations (for example, medicolegal authority, hospital association, ESF-8 representative).
18. Integrate the NTSB, the carrier, the Red Cross, and other relevant stakeholders to ensure that the travel and logistical support needs of the families of passengers are being addressed, giving special consideration to security, the quality of hotel rooms and facilities, privacy, and access and functional needs.

19. Coordinate family assistance efforts with local response organizations and individuals, including the medical examiner, law enforcement, OEM, hospitals, and other responding organizations.
20. Provide family members with contact information for local law enforcement and/or the presiding medicolegal authority to answer questions and concerns regarding victim accounting, identification processes and reunification efforts.
21. Facilitate the federal response in the recovery and identification of fatally injured passengers involved in the rail passenger train accident.
22. Notify the DHHS to initiate the NDMS and the appropriate DMORT personnel, supplies, and equipment to assist in the management of fatality identification, as needed.
23. Facilitate coordination between DOS and the presiding medicolegal authority to support fatality recovery and identification efforts for foreign passengers, as applicable.
24. Inform the presiding medicolegal authority about the role of the Red Cross and the support services available to families, to include coordinating efforts for memorial services associated with individuals or group remains interment and psychological, emotional, and spiritual care.
25. Coordinate and initiate requests for federal family assistance assets using MOAs/MOUs as determined necessary.
26. Coordinate with DHS and FPS to provide law enforcement and security services at any federally leased, owned, or occupied facility, property, investigation site, operational area, asset, or other location owned, occupied, or secured by the federal government during the course of an NTSB investigation, hearing, meeting, or study, including facilities used for FACs, FRCs, and JFSOC operations and for press briefings, telecasts, and other functions.
27. Organize and facilitate family briefings to ensure that the families of passengers are provided information to the maximum extent practicable prior to any NTSB public briefing, about the accident, its causes, and any other findings from the NTSB's investigation.
28. If the accident location remains under the control of the NTSB, assess the potential of a site visit for families of passengers. Accident scenes under the control of law enforcement officers require collaboration among the responsible agency, NTSB, carrier, the Red Cross, and other support agencies. Management of the site visit should be coordinated through the JFSOC. See [Appendix 16](#) for site visit considerations.
29. Upon request, facilitate the sharing of contact information among survivors and/or family members.
30. Coordinate an on-scene and post-response family assistance assurance review with the carrier and the Red Cross to review the family assistance operation and

legislative requirements and to identify challenges and lessons learned, with the goal of enhancing operating plans and procedures in the future.

31. Within 45 days of the accident, monitor for, and respond accordingly to, any unsolicited communications from attorneys received by families of passengers.<sup>59</sup>
32. Determine whether a 30-day extension is required for the Red Cross as the designated organization to ensure access to services by families of passengers beyond 30 days after the accident has occurred.<sup>60</sup>
33. Via JFSOC meetings, support the coordination of PE management by response partners. See [Appendix 8](#) for JFSOC information.
  - 33.1. Ensure that the affected carrier is aware of its role and responsibilities regarding the PE management obligations outlined in federal legislation.
  - 33.2. Ensure that families of passengers are informed about PE recovery, processing, claim, and disposition.

**Note:** For PE retained for an accident investigation or a criminal investigation, securing and returning these items is typically the responsibility of the investigative agency. The NTSB will coordinate the return of PE it has retained for an accident investigation.
  - 33.3. Determine the evidentiary value of PE, retain relevant items, and release non-evidentiary PE to the appropriate organization, communicating with the families of passengers regarding the investigative process and the return of PE taken into NTSB custody.
  - 33.4. The Federal Bureau of Investigation's Victim Services Division coordinates the provision of federal family assistance activities if the investigation determines that the accident is the result of an intentional criminal act.
  - 33.5. Coordinate the transition of PE management to the FBI if the event has been determined to be a criminal act.
34. Inform families of passengers of NTSB public hearings and meetings pertaining to the investigation and provide information about attendance at the event.
35. Ensure that briefings are made available simultaneously by electronic means for survivors/family members that are not able to attend briefings in person.

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<sup>59</sup> [49 U.S.C. §1139\(g\)\(2\)](#)

<sup>60</sup> [49 U.S.C. §1139\(g\)\(3\)](#)

## Carrier FSTs

1. Submit a plan to the NTSB, the Secretary of Transportation, and the Secretary of Homeland Security for addressing the needs of the families of passengers involved in a rail passenger train accident resulting in any loss of life.<sup>61</sup> See [Appendix 2](#) for submission guidance.
  - 1.1. If the carrier requires the utilization of the Red Cross or any other suitably trained individuals to initiate notification to the families of the passengers at the time of the accident, a mutually agreed-upon plan should be established in advance and included in the carrier's plan filed with the NTSB, the Secretary of Transportation, and the Secretary of Homeland Security.
2. Provide adequate training to the employees and agents of the carrier to meet the needs of survivors and family members following an accident.<sup>62</sup>
3. Establish a process for notifying the family members of passengers regarding the passengers' involvement in the accident.<sup>63</sup>
4. Provide adequate training to employees and agents (for example, customer support, reservations) to meet the needs of survivors and family members following an accident. Training topics should include, but are not limited to, these:
  - 4.1. Federal transportation accident family assistance legislation
  - 4.2. The carrier's roles and available resources
  - 4.3. The role of response partners, including the Red Cross
  - 4.4. The employee's and agent's specific role
  - 4.5. Psychological first aid, crisis response, interpersonal communication, and stress management
5. Establish a plan for providing media updates regarding the carrier's family assistance operation. Consider providing information regarding these:
  - 5.1. Availability of the toll-free number
  - 5.2. Establishment of family assistance facilities
  - 5.3. Progress of the family notification process (the number of families notified, the number of families remaining to be notified, and/or completion of the process)

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<sup>61</sup> [49 U.S.C. §24316\(a\)](#)

<sup>62</sup> [49 U.S.C. §24316\(b\)\(8\)](#)

<sup>63</sup> The carrier is under no obligation to publicly release the names of passengers; however, if the carrier elects to do so, the carrier should provide notification to family members prior to releasing this information. The carrier should give family members adequate time to notify other family members prior to public release.

- 5.4. Information regarding resources available to passengers' families
6. In addition to the accident notification requirements under, 49 C.F.R §830.5 as soon as practicable, complete and submit the NTSB TDA Accident Notification Supplemental Information Worksheet (see [Appendix 5](#)) to assistance@ntsb.gov.
  7. Provide the NTSB, and the Red Cross, and/or JFSOC liaison, upon request, a copy of the passenger list, based on the best available information at the time of the request.
    - 7.1. Provide subsequent versions of the passenger list to the NTSB, the Secretary of Transportation, and the Secretary of Homeland Security, upon request and at regular intervals as agreed upon by the carrier and the NTSB, based on the specific circumstances of the accident. The information contained on the passenger list should be the best available information at the time the request is made or at the agreed-upon intervals. Provide updated passenger list to the Red Cross and/or JFSOC liaison (if initially requested) at the same time as those provided to the NTSB.
  8. Develop procedures to consider and respond to additional requests for the passenger list from the local response community.
    - 8.1. Provide the NTSB with information about the requesting agency and what information from the passenger list was shared.
    - 8.2. See [Appendix 6](#) for distribution guidance.
  9. Develop procedures to notify the NTSB TDA when information from the passenger list has been released to requesting agencies and when requests for information have been denied.
  10. Ensure equal treatment of the families of revenue passengers, non-revenue passengers, and any other victim of the accident.
  11. Secure private facilities at departure, arrival, connecting stations, and hubs, as needed, local authority(ies) for use as family assistance facilities. Families of passengers may elect to gather at these locations while in transit to the accident location. Facilities established to support family assistance operations should be compliant with the ADA.<sup>64</sup>
  12. Notify family members (in person, if practicable)<sup>65</sup> as soon as possible to verify whether a passenger was aboard the train (even if the names of all passengers have not yet been verified).
  13. Establish a toll-free telephone number to allow family members to contact the carrier directly for information regarding the carrier's assistance to family members. Consider the following:

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<sup>64</sup> [42 U.S.C. §12102](#)

<sup>65</sup> [49 U.S.C. §24316\(b\)\(4\)](#)

- 13.1. Modify the normal “hold” message. Similar considerations should be made for “on-hold” soundtrack(s) for phone lines that may receive incoming calls following an accident to eliminate music, sales information, and similar non-accident-related messages. Similar considerations should be made for all public interfaces.
- 13.2. Ensure that sufficient staff are designated to manage an increase in call volume from family members immediately following an accident.
- 13.3. Ensure that toll-free call center staff are adequately trained and prepared to work with affected family members.
- 13.4. Establish a process for efficiently gathering critical information from callers to aid in timely notification and to facilitate subsequent engagement regarding the family assistance operation and available services.
- 13.5. Gather and share contact data collected from affected family members both internally and with federal, state, tribal, and local response organizations (for example, data from multiple call centers, multiple family members of the same passenger) through the JFSOC.
- 13.6. Establish a process to follow up with callers who have been identified as affected family members.
- 13.7. Determine and share information about services that will be made immediately available to affected family members in the aftermath of an accident.
- 13.8. Ensure the accessibility of information to callers with varying access and functional needs (for example, speakers of languages other than English, those who rely on TTY technology, and those who may have difficulty in understanding or processing complex information).
- 13.9. Establish a plan to decommission the toll-free number as the family assistance operation transitions from an active response to long-term assistance.
14. Publicize the toll-free number and consider using both traditional and digital media outlets to emphasize the following information:
  - 14.1. The name and accident train number of the carrier(s) involved. Provide all partner information.
  - 14.2. The origination, connecting, and destination stations.
  - 14.3. That the toll-free number is for family members of passengers believed to be on the train.
  - 14.4. That the carrier has activated its family assistance program in response to the accident and encourage families to contact the carrier through the toll-free number to receive additional information and support.



15. Ensure the publicized toll-free telephone number remains operable with sufficient capacity to handle the anticipated call volume to collect contact information of family members of passengers.
16. Inform families of passengers at the time of initial notification (or soon thereafter) about the involvement of the Red Cross and their available services and provide reminders throughout the operation about these services to address any needs for psychological, emotional, and spiritual care.
17. Coordinate directly with the Red Cross JFSOC liaison to address support requests for psychological, emotional, and spiritual care as they are received by the carrier's family assistance teams or other sources and to ensure that adequate facility space is available for providing these services and to accommodate support services staff.
18. Designate a representative of the carrier's security division to collaborate with DHS FPS and other law enforcement agencies (for example, local, state, tribal, federal) to conduct a threat assessment to determine the necessary level of security.
19. Work with the local jurisdiction to secure a facility to serve as the FAC, considering size, services available, security, privacy, and proximity to the key elements of the family assistance operation. Make alternate accommodations to provide information and offer resources to families of passengers when a physical FAC is not established, or individuals elect not to travel to the primary FAC. Facilities established to support alternate accommodations should be ADA compliant.
  - 19.1. Coordinate adequate private spaces or rooms within the FAC, or other suitable location, for the presiding medicolegal authority, the Red Cross, and other family assistance operation organizations to communicate privately with families of passengers. These spaces should be equipped with sufficient technology to allow for virtual meetings (for example, conference calls and web-based video conferences).
  - 19.2. Make provisions for a JFSOC to include meeting space, separate workspace, communication technologies, and logistical support for local, state, tribal, and federal response partners. If available, separate workspace may be made available for the NTSB and the Red Cross on a full- or part-time basis, as needed.
  - 19.3. Ensure the provision of an adequate number of private rooms or space in the FAC for families of passengers to meet with the presiding medicolegal authority or designee, for the authority to obtain antemortem information, and/or for the collection of DNA reference samples. These rooms can also be used for other family assistance support services when the medicolegal authority has completed their process.



- 19.4. Provide a dedicated area in the FAC, or other suitable location, for the Red Cross to establish as an area for families and survivors to grieve privately.<sup>66</sup>
- 19.5. Provide a dedicated area in the FAC, or other suitable location, for the Red Cross to establish on-site temporary respite care for families who arrive with minors.
- 19.6. As part of broader FAC security, establish a badging system that uniquely identifies families of passengers for access within family assistance facilities. Considerations should be made regarding badging requirements for individuals who have a need to access family assistance facilities.
- 19.7. Coordinate through the JFSOC badging requirements for support personnel; if necessary, consider development of a unique badging system to ensure proper identification and to allow access for other supporting agencies. In unique cases, the NTSB, in coordination with the carrier, will decide on the layout and design of the badge(s).
20. Inform the presiding medicolegal authority about the carrier's assistance that is available to families of passengers related to the disposition of human remains. If assistance is being provided via a service provider, ensure that connections are made between the family and the service provider.
21. Consult with the family of each fatally injured passenger in coordination with the medicolegal authority about available resources related to the disposition of human remains.
22. Provide DOS representatives information regarding foreign passengers necessary for facilitating interaction with appropriate foreign government embassies.
23. Designate a contact person(s) to support families of passengers while they remain in the accident location. If possible, this person(s) should continue to be the carrier's interface with the family until the family returns to their residence, or until the conclusion of the on-site family assistance operation.
  - 23.1. If the family has not previously received official notification, notify them of their loved one's involvement in the accident at an appropriate time as soon as possible after the family arrives in the accident location.
  - 23.2. For family members not present in the accident location, establish a contact for remote support to ensure the delivery of daily updates during the on-site family assistance operation. Communicate any changes to the support structure between on-site/immediate support and long-term support to the TDA JFSOC liaison as soon as possible.

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<sup>66</sup> [49 U.S.C. §1139\(c\)\(2\)](#)

24. Work with any organization designated under section 1139(a)(2) on an ongoing basis to ensure that families of passengers receive an appropriate level of services and assistance following each accident.<sup>67</sup> This may include the following:
  - 24.1. Informing and making available carrier personnel at departure, connecting, and arrival stations to offer assistance.
  - 24.2. Informing station employees and crews that families of passengers are aboard.
  - 24.3. Seeking assistance from other carriers with a presence at airports or transportation hubs where family members will be transiting.
  - 24.4. When possible, tell family members about other available services (for example, the Red Cross) at first contact with the family.
25. Designate a senior representative of the carrier (see [Appendix 8](#)) who will serve as the representative to the NTSB's designated director of family support services. This person will oversee the carrier's family assistance operation and may need to—
  - 25.1. Travel to various locations, such as the accident location, healthcare facilities, medicolegal facilities, JFSOC, and FAC.
  - 25.2. Address questions regarding the carrier's Emergency Response Plan (for example, service providers, available resources, and limits to family assistance support).
  - 25.3. Participate in, or coordinate the participation of, an alternative spokesperson for family briefings.
26. Designate a family assistance coordinator from the carrier who will serve as the primary POC regarding the carrier's day-to-day family assistance operations. Depending on the unique nature of the accident and the resources available from the family assistance response partner, it may be necessary for one individual to take on multiple roles or to delegate specific tasks to other individuals within their organization. See [Appendix 8](#) for additional duties.
27. Designate a JFSOC liaison from the carrier, who will remain present in the JFSOC to coordinate the carrier's ongoing family assistance operations. This person should have the authority to make decisions and commit resources on behalf of the carrier. See [Appendix 8](#) for additional duties.
28. Assign a primary POC to the Red Cross JFSOC liaison to ensure that requests from families of passengers or survivors received by the carrier for emotional, spiritual, and psychological care services or referrals are addressed, regardless of where the families or survivors are located. See [Appendix 8](#) for additional duties.
29. Review with the NTSB, the Red Cross, and other relevant stakeholders the travel and logistical support needs (for example, video, software, or other technological

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<sup>67</sup> [49 U.S.C. §24316\(b\)\(10\)](#)

- needs) of the families of passengers, giving special consideration to security, the quality of hotel rooms and facilities, privacy, equitable access, and functional needs.
30. Advise the NTSB and the Red Cross if family members have expressed that they would prefer not to engage directly with carrier representatives so that alternative means of offering information and services are made available.
  31. Monitor the needs of injured passengers and their family members at each medical treatment facility through ongoing coordination with the Red Cross JFSOC liaison and other agency JFSOC liaisons to ensure access to information and resources.
  32. Coordinate with the Red Cross spiritual care staff to address family member requests for memorial services.
  33. Participate in the preparation and logistical coordination of an accident site visit for families of passengers if such a visit is determined appropriate by the NTSB.
  34. If appropriate and requested by the families of passengers, support the Red Cross in facilitating a memorial service for any future burial of unidentified human remains through coordination with the families, the local medicolegal authority, and other relevant local organizations.
  35. Assure that the families of passengers will be consulted about any carrier-sponsored monument, including any inscriptions.
  36. Coordinate directly with the FBI VSD regarding the provision of family assistance if the event is determined to be an intentional criminal act and the NTSB relinquishes investigative priority to the FBI.
  37. Provide reasonable compensation to the Red Cross for services they have provided if requested by the Red Cross National Headquarters.<sup>68</sup>
  38. Participate in the NTSB-coordinated family assistance assurances reviews, both on-scene and post-response, to review the family assistance operation and legislative requirements, to resolve problems, and to update operating plans and procedures.
  39. Ensure that a plan is in place to address the management of PE within the control of the carrier. See [Appendix 17](#) for more information. The carrier may consider using a third party that has experience in managing PE associated with MCIs.
  40. Ensure that families will be consulted about the disposition of all personal effects within the control of the carrier and by which any possession of the passenger within the control of the carrier (regardless of its condition)—<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> [49 U.S.C. §24316\(b\)\(11\)](#)

<sup>69</sup> [49 U.S.C. §24316\(b\)\(6\)](#)

- 40.1. Will be returned to the family unless the possession is needed for the accident investigation or any criminal investigation.<sup>70</sup>
- 40.2. Will be retained by the carrier for at least 18 months<sup>71</sup>
- 41. Consult with the NTSB regarding the carrier's role in the return process of any PE in the custody of the NTSB.
- 42. Consult with other entities that may have a role in the management of PE (for example, medicolegal authority, local, state, tribal, or federal law enforcement, insurance companies, hospitals) to determine the carrier's role in the return process of any PE in the custody of those entities.
- 43. Provide updates regarding the PE management process during daily JFSOC meetings and post-accident response discussions. Specific information to share includes the role of a third-party, progress and complications with the returns process, and the status of unclaimed or unwanted items 18 months following the accident. See [Appendix 8](#) and [Appendix 10](#) for additional information.
- 44. Consult with survivors and family members regarding the disposition of remains of carry-on or checked fatally injured pets.
- 45. Notify family members both before and after any planned disposal of unclaimed PE within the control of the carrier that will occur after the required 18-month retention period lapses.

## Red Cross FSTs

1. Designate an NTSB liaison familiar with federal family assistance legislation, the NTSB-Red Cross MOU, and the roles and responsibilities of the Red Cross, the NTSB, and the carrier to support the regional or the local Red Cross leadership team assigned to serve as the functional lead for emotional, spiritual, and psychological care services in accordance with the legislation.
2. Assign a JFSOC liaison who will remain present in the JFSOC to coordinate ongoing family assistance operations on behalf of the Red Cross with the authority to make decisions on behalf of the organization. The liaison is responsible for participating in daily JFSOC status meetings, providing operational updates and the status of daily activities and services, disseminating information within their organization as appropriate, and maintaining up-to-date information regarding available Red Cross or other disaster relief organization staffing and services within the FAC and any alternate locations (for example, hospitals). See [Appendix 10](#) for the JFSOC status report form.

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<sup>70</sup> [49 U.S.C. §24316\(b\)\(6\)\(B\)](#)

<sup>71</sup> [49 U.S.C. §24316\(b\)\(6\)\(A\)](#)

3. Ensure that Red Cross staff and volunteers, and any other personnel approved by the Red Cross to provide support services, are familiar with the roles and responsibilities of the NTSB, the carrier, the Red Cross, and other federal partners during a federal family assistance operation.
4. Review with the carrier, the NTSB, and other stakeholders the travel and logistical support being provided to the families of passengers by the carrier, to provide subject matter expertise related to the access and functional needs of family members and survivors and to ensure that needs are being adequately addressed.
5. Coordinate with the carrier liaison assigned to the Red Cross to address any requests from families of passengers or survivors for emotional, spiritual and/or psychological care services or referrals, regardless of their locations (for example, an FAC, hotel, hospitals, other medical treatment facilities, home).
6. Assign Red Cross disaster mental health staff or volunteers to coordinate with local disaster relief organizations or agencies to address on-site emotional and psychological care requests during the JFSOC coordination phase.
7. Assign Red Cross spiritual care staff or volunteers or coordinate with local disaster relief organizations or agencies to provide on-site spiritual care at the FAC or other suitable location.
8. Coordinate staffing activities with the carrier to ensure that the badging of support personnel providing emotional, spiritual, and psychological care services at the FAC or other suitable location is adequate. If necessary, consider developing a unique badging system to ensure proper identification and to allow access for other disaster relief organizations approved by the Red Cross.
9. Coordinate with the carrier to establish a dedicated area in the FAC, or other suitable location, for families and survivors to grieve privately<sup>72</sup> and provide appropriate staff, as necessary.
10. Coordinate with the carrier to establish a secure location within the FAC, or other suitable location, for on-site temporary respite care for survivors or families of passengers who arrive with minors, if determined necessary by the carrier, the Red Cross, and the NTSB, and provide appropriate staff.
11. Coordinate with the carrier to identify adequate private spaces or rooms with technology and telephonic capabilities within the FAC, or other suitable location, necessary for providing on-scene, remote, or virtual psychological, emotional, and spiritual care support to survivors and/or families of passengers.
12. Manage spontaneous unaffiliated volunteers, as necessary.
13. Manage unsolicited donations through partnerships with local community entities experienced in donation management, as necessary.

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<sup>72</sup> [49 U.S.C. §1139\(c\)\(2\)](#)

14. For resources other than psychological, emotional, and spiritual care support, coordinate with the carrier to identify the availability for additional resources needed.
15. Employ an accounting system to accurately record cost data in specific cost categories in case the Red Cross National Headquarters later requests reimbursement for their response from the carrier.
16. Facilitate a memorial service for any future burial of unidentified human remains through coordination with the families, the local medicolegal authority, the carrier, and other relevant local organizations, when appropriate. Should these services occur outside of the JFSOC operational period, coordinate directly with the carrier's identified individual(s) for ongoing support. Notify the NTSB TDA Red Cross coordinator of the event date and time. See [Appendix 8](#) for more information.
17. Participate in the preparation and logistical coordination of an accident site visit for survivors or families of passengers if such a visit is determined appropriate by the NTSB. Coordinate with the NTSB and the carrier to ensure that staffing for psychological, emotional, and spiritual support is sufficient for the event.
18. Participate in the NTSB-coordinated assurances reviews, both on-scene and post-response, to review the family assistance operation and legislative requirements, resolve problem areas, and update operating plans and procedures.
19. Upon request, provide psychological, emotional, and spiritual care staff to public locations where any NTSB-conducted public hearing and meetings, or comparable proceedings, are being held or transmitted.
20. Coordinate directly with the FBI VSD if an event is determined to be an intentional criminal act and the NTSB relinquishes investigative priority to the FBI. Coordinate directly with the FBI VSD to determine their ongoing involvement in the response under agreements the Red Cross has or makes with the FBI VSD.

## DOS FSTs

1. Provide official notification to foreign governments of citizens involved in the accident. Such notifications will take place after obtaining necessary information on foreign passengers from the carrier.
2. Assist the carrier in notifying US citizens who may reside in, or who are traveling, outside the United States that a member of their family has been involved in a rail passenger train accident.
3. Assist the presiding medicolegal authority in acquiring the necessary information to facilitate the identification of foreign national fatalities and to complete death certificates.

4. Assist in obtaining dental and medical records and DNA reference samples from families of foreign national fatalities.
5. Assign a representative to the JFSOC to coordinate DOS-related issues, including obtaining records (dental and medical) and DNA reference samples from the families of foreign nationals, upon request. See [Appendix 8](#) for JFSOC information.
6. Provide logistical and communications support in establishing contact with foreign authorities and individuals abroad to aid the carrier, the Red Cross, and the NTSB in fulfilling their legislated duties, if possible.
7. Provide adequate personnel to assist the federal family assistance operation for accidents involving significant numbers of foreign nationals.
8. Provide interpretation and/or translation services (via DOS staff or a contracted provider) as needed to facilitate communications with the families of passengers and all interested parties, during family briefings.
9. Assist carrier employees and families of foreign nationals (both fatalities and survivors) with entry into the United States, extending or granting of visas to eligible applicants, as determined necessary.
10. Respond to requests of the families of passengers for information and assistance, as appropriate.
11. Coordinate with the necessary foreign mission(s) to facilitate consulate and customs services for the return of PE to the country of destination, as applicable.

## FBI FSTs

1. Provide the NTSB, upon request, an FBI ERT, and other FBI Laboratory assets to assist with fatality documentation and identification as directed by the presiding medicolegal authority.
2. If the FBI is asked to support the local response community with family assistance services, assign a JFSOC liaison to coordinate with the NTSB, the carrier, and the Red Cross to ensure integration into the federal family assistance operation.
3. If the rail passenger train accident is determined to be an intentional criminal act, assume responsibility for the investigation from the NTSB; the FBI VSD will assume federal family assistance activities, including the following:
  - 3.1. Coordinate with the NTSB TDA to ensure an effective transfer of the federal family assistance operation to reduce any additional distress to families of passengers during the transition.
  - 3.2. Coordinate with the carrier and the Red Cross regarding any ongoing responsibilities or roles they have for a federal criminal investigation.
  - 3.3. Coordinate with the NTSB regarding the transition of PE management.



### 3.4. Coordinate with the carrier regarding their role in the return of PE.

## DHHS FSTs

1. Provide the resources of the NDMS, DMORT, the VIC team, and other fatality management personnel, supplies, and equipment to assist the presiding medicolegal authority and the NTSB with the examination and identification of fatalities.
2. Provide, if necessary, a DPMU and the necessary personnel, equipment, and supplies to augment the capabilities of the presiding medicolegal authority.
3. Follow the DMORT Standard Operating Procedures for National Transportation Safety Board Activations.
4. Assign the necessary DMORT personnel, based on necessary skills and existing capabilities, to assist the presiding medicolegal authority with fatality identification and mortuary services.
5. Monitor the status of all incoming antemortem records, including dental, medical, and DNA data, to ensure that all records have been received. Take steps to obtain the missing records and radiographs.
6. Use a specially trained VIC team to interview families of passengers, both on- and off-site, regarding antemortem identification and disposition of human remains.
7. Coordinate with the presiding medicolegal authority to integrate qualified personnel into the morgue operation.
8. Assist the presiding medicolegal authority in notifying families of passengers of positive identification, including an explanation of how identification was determined, if necessary.
9. Ensure the accuracy of the chain of custody by reviewing documentation and human remains prior to their release to the designated funeral director.
10. Assist the presiding medicolegal authority with the reassociation of human remains following the identification process.
11. Provide the NTSB with contact information for the NOK, gathered from the antemortem interview.
12. Employ a standard antemortem questionnaire and disposition-of-remains form that can be adapted to meet local medical examiner and state requirements. The form will be used to obtain directions from the lawfully authorized NOK regarding their wishes for human remains that may later be identified as those of their family member.

**Note:** Information collected from families of passengers is strictly confidential and is ultimately under the control of the presiding medicolegal authority.



13. Coordinate with the presiding medicolegal authority regarding the management of PE physically associated with human remains.

## DOD FSTs

1. Provide the use of a military installation, such as the Charles C. Carson Center for Mortuary Affairs located at Dover Air Force Base, in support of mortuary operations, if requested.
2. Provide resources from AFMES and AFDIL to assist in the identification effort and to conduct appropriate DNA comparison testing on specimens submitted by the presiding medicolegal authority.

**Note:** AFMES and AFDIL personnel may travel to the accident location to assist with victim identification.

3. Provide available medical and dental records and DNA reference samples of fatalities who may have antemortem records based on prior or current military service.

## FEMA FSTs

1. Assign a JFSOC liaison to coordinate with federal, state, and local officials concerning emergency management-related issues, if requested by the NTSB. See [Appendix 8](#) for more JFSOC information.
2. Provide personnel and communication assets to facilitate communication from the accident location to the NTSB ROC, if requested by the NTSB.
3. Provide personnel to assist in public information dissemination, including assistance in establishing and staffing external media support centers at the accident location, wreckage location, locations associated with the family assistance operation, station(s) and other areas that may attract media interest, if requested by the NTSB.

## FPS FSTs

1. Coordinate with the NTSB to determine security vulnerabilities and countermeasure requirements for location(s) associated with the NTSB investigation (for example, those for the accident location, those associated with the family assistance operation, and those for media briefings).
2. Conduct building and facility security risk assessments, upon request from the NTSB; provide a threat assessment and recommendations for ensuring the security of designated locations.

3. Ensure that sufficient certified, trained, and equipped uniformed personnel are provided as deemed appropriate by the threat assessment, for each designated location.
4. Provide protection for designated NTSB Board Members and NTSB staff during the response.
5. Provide an FPS-operated mobile command vehicle to afford interoperable communications and a secure environment for use by NTSB staff.
6. Assume responsibility for investigations associated with FPS activities at NTSB-designated locations as required, and share current intelligence with the NTSB, as permitted by law, regulation, or order, at the affected location.