

# Agenda Item Report



**Winnebago County**  
*The Wave of the Future*

DATE:  
FROM: Emergency Management and Medical Examiner  
RE: Acceptance of Mobile Morgue Unit

## **General Description:**

We are requesting approval for the acceptance of ownership of mobile morgue unit being donated by the Fox Valley HERC.

## **Action Requested:**

Approval of the acceptance of a mobile morgue unit being donated by the Fox Valley HERC with a value of \$31,560.

## **Procedural Steps:**

Committee of Jurisdiction:	Meeting date:
Action taken: _____	Vote: _____
County Board	Meeting date:

## **Background:**

The combination of the COVID-19 pandemic as well as the opioid epidemic have shown us that there is a large gap in mortuary storage in Winnebago County and throughout the Region. The acceptance of the donation of a mobile morgue unit will allow Winnebago County and the Region additional storage in the event of a mass casualty incident.

## **Policy Discussion:**

From December 2021 until mid-July 2022 Winnebago County needed to borrow a mobile morgue trailer unit from Clark County to have a place to store the decedents prior to release or autopsy. The permanent morgue unit that is being built will help with the day to day capacity needed by the Medical Examiner's office; this donation will provide additional capacity in the event of a mass casualty incident.

The National Library of Medicine<sup>1</sup> defines a mass casualty incident as “an event that overwhelms the local healthcare system, where the number of casualties vastly exceeds the local resources and capabilities in a short period of time.” Mass casualty incidents can result from violence, such as mass shootings, chemical, biological, or radiological events, extreme weather or natural disasters, such as tornadoes, floods, and wildfires, or transportation incidents, such as multi-vehicle car crashes and train collisions.

Mass casualty incidents continue to increase in frequency and severity. According to the NPS Center for Homeland Security and Defense<sup>2</sup>, intentional MCIs which result in casualties that overwhelm the

healthcare system, have risen approximately 5% each year since 1900. Along with the increased frequency, the lethality of these events has grown. Omitting the extraordinary events of the Murrah Federal Building bombing of 1996 and the attacks of September 11, 2001, more people have been killed in intentional MCIs in the last ten years (428 killed between 2009-2019) than in the previous 60 years (405 killed between 1948-2008). Natural disasters have also increased in frequency and severity. According to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration<sup>3</sup> in the 1980's the United States averaged 3.3 billion-dollar disasters per year, resulting in 299 deaths per year. In the 2010's this number rose to 13.1 billion-dollar disasters per year resulting in 523 deaths per year.

This unit is meant to be used in temporary, overflow capacity and not for every day or long-term storage. There will be no associated costs with owning this unit. There is a compressor/generator that requires maintenance that will be added to the facilities maintenance list.

This unit will be available as a Regional asset should a mass casualty incident occur in another county.

**Attachments:**

None

**Citations:**

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK482373/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.hsaj.org/articles/16880>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.ncei.noaa.gov/access/billions/summary-stats>