

KENYON

EMERGENCY SERVICES

A WHEELS UP COMPANY

CASE STUDY

Response to Haiti earthquake

BACKGROUND

On the 12th of January 2010, a 7.0 earthquake struck Haiti east of the coast, inflicting significant loss of life and widespread destruction. The estimated death toll was over 220,000 people.

The Headquarters of the United Nations peacekeeping mission in Haiti, located in Port-au-Prince, collapsed, and several other UN facilities were damaged. Many UN personnel and family members were unaccounted for in the aftermath of the earthquake.

The United Nations tasked Kenyon with the search for, recovery, identification and repatriation of the UN personnel. Kenyon deployed a multi-skilled international team and specialist equipment to Haiti.

CHALLENGES

Natural disasters resulting in mass fatalities where numbers of foreign nationals and different agencies are involved can present challenges to those commanding the operation. The individual incident sites also presented major occupational health and safety challenges.

Many deceased were located at the sites that could not be identified as UN personnel.

The unidentified deceased were also left outside the mortuary refrigerated units and hospitals overnight by unknown personnel for the Kenyon team to manage.

Due to the overall destruction of Port-au-Prince and surrounding areas, facilities such as transport, mortuary facilities, deceased storage, accommodations, logistics, and supplies were unavailable.



SOLUTIONS

A Kenyon first response team was deployed from the United States to Port-au-Prince to assess the response requirements. The team conducted detailed assessments of the affected UN buildings and developed an operational plan, which was agreed upon by the UN management.

Search, and recovery teams were deployed to Port-au-Prince to assist in the search and recovery of victims located at the various UN affected buildings. The team members assisted with deceased data management, deceased remains management, personal effects management, and deceased chain of custody from site to refrigerated containers.

Kenyon also performed deceased recovery at particular sites at the request of the UN.

Kenyon established a mortuary facility in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic, to conduct post-mortem and victim identification procedures.

Personal effects on the deceased were cleaned by Kenyon and returned to the victim's families at the request of the individual families and the UN representatives.

Once the victims were identified and the families and the UN were advised, Kenyon managed the repatriation of the deceased from Haiti to the next of kin at their home location.

Kenyon activated its Crisis Management Centre (CMC) in Houston, Texas, US, to support operations in Port-au-Prince and Santo Domingo. The primary roles performed by the CMC included the selection and deployment of appropriate Kenyon personnel for the incident response, logistical support with equipment and items not available in Haiti and administration support.

RESULTS

Kenyon had the operational capacity and capability to provide a specialist disaster response team to focus their skills and expertise on locating, recovering, managing, identifying, and repatriating the deceased found at specific locations in the disaster region.

Including carrying out comprehensive safety assessments of each of the sites and ensuring all team members followed health and safety procedures and wore appropriate personal protective equipment at all times.

Ensured timely, effective communication and cooperation occurred between all parties, including the United Nations representatives on-site and other government agencies.

The deceased that could not be associated with the UN contingent were buried in a dignified manner at a gravesite arranged by the UN. Each of the deceased underwent a full post-mortem where DNA samples were collected for subsequent testing and comparison and sent to Interpol. The location of the grave sites were also recorded, geo-tagged and information passed across to Interpol.

In addition, to avoid logistical issues in Port-au-Prince and Santo Domingo, Kenyon opened its CMC in Houston to source and transport equipment and items from the US.

If you would like to know more about Kenyon International Emergency Services, visit kenyoninternational.com or contact kenyon@kenyoninternational.com

