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LOUISIANA STATE URBAN SEARCH AND RESCUE PROGRAM

LOUISIANA INCIDENT SUPPORT TEAM HISTORY

The Louisiana Incident Support Team (IST) was born somewhat prematurely in August of 2016 when a "catch-up" team made up of members of the Louisiana State Fire Marshal's Office, the Louisiana Urban Search and Rescue Program, and the New Orleans Fire Department's Incident Management Team came together to respond to the Baton Rouge area flooding that month. Our Team was able to merge and work with the FEMA Red IST during that event and that team's capabilities, professionalism, and dedication to excellence impressed us so much that we decided to form our own team.

We were finally able to do so in December of 2017. Our initial training sessions served to teach us mainly about how little we actually knew of the Incident Command System (ICS). We took this rather painful information to heart and spent a great deal of home time studying the ICS until we felt that we were ready to put it to work. We began a series of formal classes, table top exercises, functional, and full scale exercises that left us feeling that we were reasonably ready to perform well in the field.

Our first assignment was to assist the South Carolina IST in their response to Hurricane Florence in 2018. The mission did go reasonably well but we found quite a few bumps in our road that needed smoothing out. While on that deployment, Fire Marshals Jones (South Carolina) and Browning (Louisiana) conceived the idea of creating a standing EMAC agreement whereby the ISTs and, eventually the task forces from one state would conduct a tiered response when the other state saw trouble impending.

Our IST has also responded to Tropical Storms Barry, Cristobal, and Marco, and Hurricanes Michael, Dorian, Laura, Sally, Delta, and Zeta, and several tornado strikes. These events, as well as our co-deployments with our FEMA and South Carolina partners and the invaluable lessons we have learned from them has increased our professionalism to the point that we are no longer reasonably capable, rather we are credibly competent.

We are currently (2020) navigating a FEMA assisted training program for our team that had us conducting a table top exercise in August with an After Action Review to follow soon, and will see the FEMA National Education Program assisting us in conducting a Full Scale Exercise in 2021. We hope to use our experience and training to further our capabilities that allow us to continue to provide emergency protection to the citizens of the great State of Louisiana.