

TX-TF1 Assists after West Fertilizer Plant Explosion in West, Texas



On the evening of April 17, 2013, an large fire occurred at the West Fertilizer plant in the city of West, Texas. Due to health concerns, a portion of the area was immediately evacuated. The fire resulted in a large explosion at the plant causing significant damage to homes and structures within a half-mile of the fertilizer plant. The explosion was the equivalent of nearly 10 tons of TNT and registered as a 2.1 Magnitude on the Richter Scale.



The on-duty Texas Task Force 2 (TX-TF2) Type III Urban Search and Rescue (US&R) team was requested soon after the explosion at 2200 hours and arrived on scene at 0200 hours to begin searching for survivors.

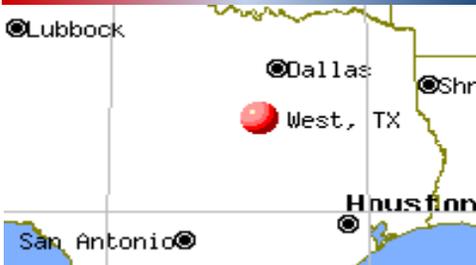
Texas Task Force One (TX-TF1) received a orders around 11pm for technical personnel to assess the damage caused by the explosion. Early in the morning, 3am, the following day the State of Texas ordered the activation a Type I Urban Search and Rescue (US&R) Team and two human remains canine teams.



Upon arriving in the city of West, TX-TF1 conducted wide area searches south and southeast of the area site, clearing nearly 200 homes. TX-TF1 and TX-TF2 then coordinated shoring and delayering of an apartment complex that had taken severe damage from the blast.

On the second day, the ATF and the Texas Fire Marshall's Office cleared the blast crater for operations, and TX-TF1 worked to search the fertilizer plant and the crater for missing persons and the fire fighters who lost their lives fighting the plant fire before the explosion. Because of the large number of hazardous materials present, the canines were unable to operate in the crater, so TX-TF1 had to conduct the technical search without the aide of the canine teams.

The two teams successfully completed their mission several days later, and TX-TF2 demobilized on April 19 and TX-TF1 demobilized on the morning of April 20, 2013.



Deployment Statistics:

•Incident involved 81 people deployed for 3 days

- Type I US&R Task Force
- 2 ESF-9 Coordinators assigned at the State Operations Center
- ESF-9 Coordination Center was activated in College



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