



# **SC – TROPICAL STORM DEBBY 2024**

**TYPE I SWIFTWATER/FLOOD RESCUE TEAM**

**AUGUST 6-12, 2024**

**AFTER ACTION REPORT**

Report Completed October 26, 2024



## INCIDENT SUMMARY

### Incident Details:

**Incident Name:** Hurricane Debby  
**Jurisdiction:** South Carolina State Fire  
**Date:** August 6-12, 2024

### Type of Response:

**Requester:** State of South Carolina  
**Type of request:** EMAC Request for Type I Swiftwater/Flood SAR team  
**EMAC request made:** August 5, 2024  
**EMAC offer approved:** August 5, 2024  
**EMAC number:** 3098-RR-13533  
**Time of departure from MOB:** August 5, 2024 @ 0614 hours  
**Time of arrival to staging:** August 5, 2024 @ 2019 hours  
**Location of staging:** South Carolina Fire Academy  
141 Monticello Trail, Columbia, SC

### Primary Point of Contact:

**Name:** Chad Beam  
**Title:** IST, SC State Fire  
**Phone:** 803-528-0291  
**Email:** chad.beam@llr.sc.gov



## **Report Completed By:**

**Name:** Ryan Wilkinson / Shadd Whitehead  
**Title:** Planning Team Manager (PTM) / Task Force Leader (TFL)  
**Email:** planning@michiganmabas.us

## **Summary Narrative:**

On August 6, 2024, Michigan Task Force 1 (MI-TF1) deployed an 18-member Type 1 Swiftwater Rescue Team, equipped with six vehicles and four boats, to South Carolina under an Emergency Management Assistance Compact (EMAC) request. The deployment was initiated due to the anticipated impact of Tropical Storm Debby, with an initial duration of 11 days, scheduled to end on August 16.

MI-TF1 arrived at the South Carolina State Fire Academy in Columbia on the evening of August 6, receiving instructions to return the next morning for their assignment. After spending the night at the South Carolina Criminal Justice Academy, the team was directed to Marion County, where they met with the county's Emergency Operations Center (EOC) personnel and the local Emergency Manager to assess the region's needs.

Upon review, it was determined that Marion County had minimal water rescue capabilities, making MI-TF1 the primary resource for any boat-based operations. The team's missions included evacuating 30-40 dogs from the local animal control facility to a vacant animal hospital, developing maps for Marion County, and conducting door-to-door voluntary evacuation efforts, alongside local responders, covering hundreds of homes along the Little Pee Dee River.

Fortunately, Marion County experienced only minimal to moderate impacts from the storm. As a result, MI-TF1 was demobilized early, on August 11, and returned home on August 12. Throughout the deployment, the MI-TF1 Type 1 Swiftwater team upheld the highest standards of professionalism, representing the State of Michigan with distinction. The team successfully completed their mission, with all personnel returning home safely and without incident.

## MI-TF1 PERSONNEL ROSTER & POSITION

<b>SHADD WHITEHEAD</b>	<b>Task Force Leader</b>
<b>JOE CHOPSKI</b>	<b>Deputy Task Force Leader</b>
<b>RYAN WILKINSON</b>	<b>Planning Team Manager</b>
<b>TIM ANDREWS</b>	<b>SAR Tech / Comms Specialist</b>
<b>GARY FOX</b>	<b>Logistics Team Manager</b>
<b>JASON HENDRICK</b>	<b>Logistics Specialist</b>
<b>COLVIN TAYLOR</b>	<b>SAR Tech / Medical Spec.</b>
<b>DAVID KARACUK</b>	<b>SAR Tech / Medical Spec.</b>
<b>DAVE POTTER</b>	<b>SAR Tech / Rescue Boat Operator</b>
<b>DAN DAWE</b>	<b>SAR Tech / Rescue Boat Operator</b>
<b>W RIPPETOE</b>	<b>SAR Tech / Rescue Boat Operator</b>
<b>CURTIS WALSH</b>	<b>SAR Tech / Rescue Boat Operator</b>
<b>JORDAN HAISMA</b>	<b>SAR Tech / Rescue Boat Bowman</b>
<b>DEAN ENGLAND</b>	<b>SAR Tech / Rescue Boat Bowman</b>
<b>ADRIAN EDER</b>	<b>SAR Tech / Rescue Boat Bowman</b>
<b>CHRIS BELANGER</b>	<b>SAR Tech / Rescue Boat Bowman</b>
<b>DAN CRETU</b>	<b>SAR Tech</b>
<b>LEE ROOT</b>	<b>SAR Tech</b>

## TARGETED CAPABILITIES

The purpose of this after-action report is to analyze response results, identify strengths to be maintained and built upon, identify potential areas for further improvement, and support development of corrective actions.

Input from those who deployed was solicited and consideration was given to the responses provided to the following questions:

### Capability 1: Activation & Mobilization

- Strengths regarding the Activation & Mobilization Process
- Weaknesses regarding the Activation & Mobilization Process
- Suggestions for Improvement regarding Activation & Mobilization Process
- Additional Comments regarding Activation & Mobilization Process

### Capability 2: Travel Caravan from the MOB

- Strengths regarding the Travel Caravan Process
- Weaknesses regarding the Travel Caravan Process
- Suggestions for Improvement regarding Travel Caravan Process
- Additional Comments regarding Travel Caravan Process

### Capability 3: In-Theater Operations

- Strengths regarding the In-Theater Operations
- Weaknesses regarding the In-Theater Operations
- Suggestions for Improvement regarding In-Theater Operations
- Additional Comments regarding In-Theater Operations

### Capability 4: Skills & Abilities of MI-TF1 Personnel

- Strengths regarding the Skills & Abilities of MI-TF1 Personnel
- Weaknesses regarding the Skills & Abilities of MI-TF1 Personnel
- Suggestions for Improvement Skills & Abilities of MI-TF1 Personnel
- Additional Comments regarding Skills & Abilities of MI-TF1 Personnel

### **Capability 5: Demobilization Process**

- Strengths regarding the Demobilization Process
- Weaknesses regarding the Demobilization Process
- Suggestions for Improvement Demobilization Process
- Additional Comments regarding Demobilization Process

## ANALYSIS OF RESPONSES AND ACTION ITEMS

Personnel who were on this deployment provided over 80 comments to the questions asked. These comments were reviewed by MITF1 Leadership and the following lists of Strengths, Weaknesses and Areas of Improvements were developed.

### Capability 1: Activation & Mobilization

- Identified Strengths regarding the Activation & Mobilization Process
  - Good balance of team mass communication and individual calls/texts.
  - The ability of the team to be out the door in a timely manner.
- Identified Weaknesses regarding the Activation & Mobilization Process
  - The importance of increased Logs personnel to support pre-deployment at the MOB Center, even for those not directly deploying.
- Identified Areas of Improvement regarding Activation & Mobilization Process
  - Consider incorporating the initiation of the "Team Fact Sheet (TFS) Form" into the pre-deployment responsibilities of the PTM in SARCOP.
  - Emphasizing the request of additional help from the remainder of the team and the benefits of this participation.

### Capability 2: Travel Caravan from the MOB

- Identified Strengths regarding the Travel Caravan Process
  - The \$10 snack/drink benefit was a major bonus.
  - Well organized with well communicated stops, ETAs, mapping, etc using GroupMe.
  - Well coordinated Ride Plans
- Identified Weaknesses regarding the Travel Caravan Process
  - Conducting more thorough pre-deployment research to enhance route planning and preparation utilizing one mapping application
  - The Fuelman Cards were not accepted or didn't work at some of the fuel stops.
- Identified Areas of Improvement regarding Travel Caravan Process
  - Synced routing information with all deployed personnel

### Capability 3: In-Theater Operations

- Identified Strengths regarding the In-Theater Operations
  - Great working relationships among personnel at all levels of the team was frequently noted.
- Identified Weaknesses regarding the In-Theater Operations
  - Team meetings or briefings did not follow a consistent format and frequently interrupted or discussion deviates off track.
- Identified Areas of Improvement regarding In-Theater Operations
  - Consider implementing a standardized agenda for briefings or meetings, with flexibility for minor adjustments based on the mission profile, whether it's a morning briefing, evening debrief, or other relevant sessions.
  - Ensure devices such as the Sonim phones are prepared for use and being carried into the theater for missions.

### Capability 4: Skills & Abilities of MITF1 Personnel

- Identified Strengths regarding the Skills & Abilities of MITF1 Personnel
  - The team is highly motivated, ready to work, and is willing to do anything asked of them, regardless of the task being large or small.
  - Logistics was extremely efficient. Exemplary even!
  - Mentorship was highlighted as a significant strength during this deployment, even more so than in previous ones.
- Identified Weaknesses regarding the Skills & Abilities of MITF1 Personnel
  - Competence on the use of technology in theater (SARCOP app, Sonims, iPads)
- Identified Areas of Improvement Skills & Abilities of MITF1 Personnel
  - Continue to seek training opportunities in swiftwater and search scenarios that will improve the skill sets and confidence of our personnel.

### Capability 5: Demobilization Process

- Identified Strengths regarding the Demobilization Process
  - The Demobilization process was quick with everyone pitching in at the Base of Operations.



- Identified Weaknesses regarding the Demobilization Process
  - Ensure there isn't duplication of effort when demobilizing the Base of Operations.
- Identified Areas of Improvement Demobilization Process
  - Continue the practice of having non-deployed Logs personnel at the MOB when crews arrive to assist in cleaning and placing equipment back in service.
  - A straightforward team demobilization plan that aligns with the IST demobilization plan, coupled with a clear briefing/meeting on team and individual expectations based on the plan, could be highly beneficial.

## SUMMARY OF ACTION ITEMS FOR IMPROVEMENT

The MITF1's Type I Swiftwater Rescue team's deployment to South Carolina was successful in achieving the core mission objectives established by South Carolina State Fire. Through effective coordination, specialized training, and dedicated teamwork, the team demonstrated resilience and adaptability in fulfilling the needs of the residents of South Carolina while representing the State of Michigan in the highest professional manner. Implementation of identified action items for improvement will further enhance the team's capabilities and readiness for future missions.

The following recommended action items are separated into three primary categories. Training, Policies & Procedures, and Equipment Improvement, Modifications & Purchases. In addition to these action items, task force leadership is already working on purchasing smaller items that were identified to improve efficiencies. These action items will continue to be monitored by TF Leadership for implementation by Section and Group leaders.

### Training:

- Reminder during Admin Exercise of a best practice where LOGS non-deploying members may be requested to assist with both pre-deployment and demob assistance at the Mobilization Center
  
- Incorporate additional technology (Sonim phone, iPad, SARCOP, etc) objectives into section trainings and exercises for enhanced opportunities to improve competency and confidence with applications and platforms

### Policies & Procedures:

- Incorporate initiation of the "Team Fact Sheet (TFS) Form" for SARCOP into the pre-deployment responsibilities of the PTM within the "PTM Job Aid"
  
- Add in POC for SARCOP/NAPSG information into the PTM Job Aid
  
- Addition of new fueling cards through WEX (discontinue use of Fuelman), which was incorporated prior to the NC deployment with very favorable results

- Develop best practice of synchronizing all vehicles with routing during deployments by distributing link for App being used by Command/Plans to all deployed members through Group Me
  
- Create a template for a standardized agenda which can be used by TFL/Dep TFL during daily morning Ops Brief and Ops Period Debrief
  
- Incorporate best practice of utilizing 209 SITREP for end of Ops Period Debrief and add into PTM Job Aid
  
- Incorporate best practice of Sonim bank charger available for members to utilize, in addition to charging cords contained in Sonim Phone Bag.
  
- Review and update Demob process; incorporate Demob updates into the PTM Job Aid and formalize a Demob Briefing that outlines Squad/Personnel assignments as part of that Demob process