



INTERPOL

DISASTER VICTIM IDENTIFICATION GUIDE

ANNEXURE 6

PHASE 4 > RECONCILIATION

NOVEMBER 2023

The Reconciliation Team compares the AM and PM findings submitted by the AM and PM Teams, respectively. For practical reasons, the Reconciliation Team should be set up as near as possible to the Operations Command Centre and/or Information Management Centre.

Considerable time can be saved in comparing AM and PM data, if data processing and evaluation software is used. However, no computer program, no matter how effective it may be, can be more than a helpful tool. Final decisions with respect to identification of the victim should be made based on all relevant criteria.

If there is no possibility of using evaluation software, other methods of establishing best possible matches and comparisons should be utilised.

6.1. Management Structure

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The member in charge of the Reconciliation Team is responsible for all sections of the unit. He/she is responsible for task distribution and personnel assignments, as well as maintaining an overview of the disposition of all individual tasks.

There should also be sufficient supervision within the Reconciliation Team to coordinate the matching process. Matches obtained based on identifying features should be submitted to other sections for review and confirmation. The management structure should also allocate authorised staff to prepare and complete identification documentation for the Identification Board.

Furthermore, the Reconciliation Team should also be structured to enable additional reviews and quality assurance activities of identification documents, as a final check prior to confirming matches. Responsibility also needs to be assigned to present completed matches with the assistance of appropriate experts to the Identification Board.

6.2. Reconciliation Sections

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A reception desk and an archive system should be established to store all AM and PM files. Separate sections should also be established that correspond to the specific identification disciplines. Within these sections, assigned experts perform the following duties and functions for each discipline:

Friction Ridge Experts – (Fingerprints)

- Quality Assurance of AM and PM data
- Statistical material submitted to the section
- Comparison of data in the (mini) AFIS and other databases, as required
- Preparation of expert opinions on matches for presentation to Identification Board
- Support for the Director at the Identification Board.

Forensic Odontology

- Quality Assurance of AM and PM data
- Establishment of best possible matches using the database software
- Physical comparison of AM and PM data maintained in specific software products and systems to identify the best possible matches
- Preparation of expert opinions on matches for presentation to Identification Board
- Support for the Director at the Identification Board.

DNA (Forensic Biology)

- Quality Assurance of AM and PM data

- Preparation of expert opinions on matches for presentation to the Identification Board
- Support for the Director at the Identification Board.

Secondary Identifying Features

- Quality Assurance of AM and PM data
- Comparison of data
- Compile data and information for presentation of circumstantial cases for the consideration of the Identification Board.
- Preparation of expert opinions on matches for presentation to the Identification Board.
- Support for the Director at the Identification Board.

6.3. Critical Reconciliation Activities

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The Reconciliation Team receives the AM and PM files as soon as they arrive after appropriate quality control measures have been performed in the respective sections (AM and PM). Quality control continues within the Reconciliation Team, to ensure adherence to uniform data standards. In addition to these quality control measures this area is responsible for:

- Collection/review of AM and PM data
- Collective classification of identification conclusions
- Preparation of a list of key AM data points and key PM data points
- Recommendation for identification by member or team
- Independent verification by second member or team
- Preparation of report with level of conclusion for submission to Identification Board.

6.4. Classification Categories

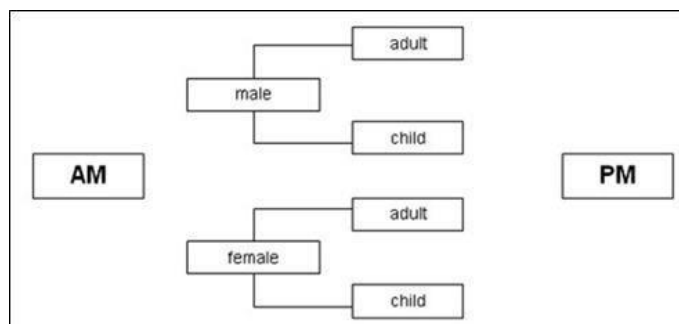
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Whilst software products are continually being developed to enhance the effective and efficient screening of AM and PM data, manual intervention is required to validate possible matches by specialist personnel.

Since searches employing PM findings with all the available AM data is excessively time consuming, the collective data should be classified according to useful criteria so that, for example, PM records for female children are compared only with AM records for female children.

Consequently, a classification by gender and age at the outset is helpful for both AM and PM records, and records should be filed accordingly.

Classification by ethnic affiliation or height is impractical in most cases, as the bodies of many victims of major disasters may be severely mutilated or destroyed (e.g., airline and train accidents) and/or because advanced stages of decomposition should be anticipated in many cases.



6.5. Preparation of AM and PM Key Markers

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To find best possible matches between AM and PM data sets, it is helpful to prepare a list of special AM and PM markers. In this way, only particularly noteworthy features of a missing person or body are recorded in a list.

A key marker list is prepared for both the AM and PM subgroups.

Sample AM key marker list				Sample PM Key marker list			
AM— adult female				PM adult female			
Name	Birth findings	Other key personal identifying features	Dental findings	Body No	Med. findings	Forensic personal description	Dental findings
Mustermann, Erica * 01/13/1969	Heart pace-maker no. 123456789			PM1	Gall bladder missing	Bald	Incisor bridge
Benthaus, Julia * 05/17/1975		Tattoo (don) on left shoulderblade	4 implants	PM2	Scar, lower right abdomen		
				PM3	Heart pace-maker no. 123456789		
				PM4		Rosex wristwatch	OK total prosthesis
				PM5	Hip joint r and l		
				PM6		Tattoo (don) on left shoulderblade (r)	4 implants
				PM7	6-year-old child		Healthy, natural teeth

Example of first matching							
List AM adult female				List PM adult female			
Name	Birth findings	Other key personal identifying features	Dental findings	Name	Birth findings	Forensic personal description	Dental findings
Mustermann, Erica * 01/13/1969	Heart pace-maker no. 123456789			PM1	Gall bladder missing	Bald	Incisor bridge
Benthaus, Julia * 05/17/1975		Tattoo (don) on left shoulderblade	4 implants	PM2	Scar, lower right abdomen		
				PM3	Heart pace-maker no. 123456789		
				PM4		Rosex wristwatch	OK total prosthesis
				PM5	Hip joint r and l		
				PM6		Tattoo (don) on left shoulderblade (r)	4 implants
				PM7	6-year-old child		Healthy, natural teeth

During the subsequent individual comparison process, the matches obtained during the first matching process depicted above are collated and checked through individual comparison of the AM missing persons file with the corresponding findings in the PM file.

This process can result in identification, rejection (non-identification), or the establishment of a possible or probable identity.

As a rule, an identification can be verified if there is a match in primary identifying features. If a match is based on secondary identifying features only, additional supporting factors should be assessed before identification is established.

6.6. Comparisons by Experts

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Before any documentation is forwarded to the Identification Board for consideration, the relevant experts who are responsible for confirming identity are required to closely compare, analyse and arrive at conclusions based on their specific area of expertise on the data collated and prepared during the earlier phases of the DVI process.

Friction Ridge Analysis

A friction ridge analysis expert should be assigned to this section. The expert compares AM friction ridge evidence with evidence obtained from the body of the victim. AFIS or similar database technology should be used in this context.

Forensic Odontology Comparison

A large amount of specific detail can be compared for the purposes of matching based on dental status. Forensic odontologists should be assigned to this section for individual comparisons.

DNA (Forensic Biology)

AM DNA profiles are compared with PM profiles by specially trained forensic biologists. Computer programs mainly make the potential match comparisons for the biologist to confirm and then calculate probability statistics. Kinship analysis may also be utilised in this process.

6.7. Identification Board

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The Identification Board is a group of experts that meet at regular intervals to discuss and verify proposals submitted by the Reconciliation Team. The Board makes final decisions regarding the identification of given victims and certifies these decisions on the DVI documentation. These are then provided to the relevant Coroner or other Judicial body for consideration. The composition of this Board will be determined by the existing legal framework.

Final identification of a disaster victim is made with the approval of the Identification Board (IB). The IB has the following specific responsibilities:

- Review and evaluate the evidence provided in each case
- Decide if the evidence is sufficient to identify the victim (if not, the case is sent back for further information)
- Localisation and reassessment of non-matches
- Compilation of results from the Comparison Report into a Victim Identification Report and approval by signature, by the signatory with jurisdiction. This record is then regarded as formal confirmation of the identification of a deceased victim.

The Identification Board is responsible for the final identification of every victim and should therefore comprise of the most experienced identification experts involved in the operation, i.e., the heads of the various sections/units (forensic pathology, odontology, fingerprints, biology) and the Director, Commander or delegate of the DVI Team. In some countries, this identification process may require a further level of authority by way of a Coroner or other Judicial oversight before final acceptance.

It may be possible to have one or two representatives (as observers) of the different countries involved in the disaster at the Identification Board.

The Identification Board works under the auspices of the investigative authority with final jurisdiction in the home country for victim identification. Depending upon the locale, this can be a coroner, judge, medical examiner, military or police authority.