17-May-21
ASB Standard 135, Scene Detection and Processing in Forensic Anthropology

Section	Type of Comment	Comments	Proposed Resolution	Editor or Working Group Review
3		The definition of geotaphonomic seems to be not correct. "Conditions that reflect how the buried body or evidence affects the surrounding environment". In For Arch and for Anthropology the taphonomic changes are usually seen as the results of external factors on the remains and not vice versa		Reject. We are defining "geotaphonomy" separately from "taphonomy" and are specifically definiing it as the effects fo the body and material evidence on the environment as opposed to the reverse.
3.4	T	A "datum" is not a system, a datum is a point in a system. Please fix this definition. Perhaps what is meant by "datum" is actually "grid system." Then it makes a bit more sense.	A datum is a fixed starting point or point within a grid systme.	Accept with modification. "System" changed to "point."
4.2.2		point 4.2.2 -Geotaphonomic features are identified as "primary and secondary depressions, differences in soil type, soil texture, soil color, invasive vegetation, vegetation altered by human activity". These should be referred as geophysical features. superficial alterations or with any other word that is not related to taphonomy (see previous comment) - soil probes and test pits are invasive methods and suggesting them (especially before geophysical or remote sensing devices) seems to contradict "minimizing scene and evidence alteration" as goal in 4.2.1		Reject. We are defining "geotaphonomy" separately from "taphonomy" and are specifically definiing it as the effects fo the body and material evidence on the environment as opposed to the reverse. The sentence is not referring to an order of operations in regards to soil probes and remote sensing, and it is not requiring that these methods be utilized, only that some circumstance may necessitate their use.
4.2.3	T	Remains and associated materials of probative value should be marked as they are discovered -- How? With paint? I know it seems pedestrian, but someone will mark a body part with marking paint and think it is ok if this is left alone.	I only point this out to avoid confusion in the long run. Perhaps marking should be modified with some term like "non-destructive" or "non-invasive."	Accept with modification. Example given for clarification.
4.2.4	T	Photographic documentation shall minimally include overall photographs of the scene in each of the cardinal directions. I have been in plenty of places where photographs in 4 cardinal directions make absolutely no sense, either due to terrain, jungle, cliffs, etc. I would modify this sentence with addtional caveats.	Photographic documentation should document the overall scene, depending on terrain and vegetation, and should include a north arrow and scale, where appropriate and functional.	Accept with modification. Cardinal directions portion removed.
4.2.4	T	When appropriate, a scene diagram or map shall be created -- the "when appropriate" in this sentece cancels out the "shall." It should be one or the other.	A scene diagram or map shall be created	Reject. There may be circumstances when a scene diagram or map may not be appropriate or feasible.
4.2.4	T	Description of the scene shall be documented (e.g., wooded area, burned house, fresh water creek,)...this is covered in the first paragraph of this section. If you would like to expand that section, I would agree with it!	Expand the first paragraph in the section, and delete this stand alone sentence.	Accept with modification. Standalone sentence removed. Information covered in second paragraph of section.
4.2.5	T	This is all very repetative in and amongst itself, as well as with the various areas above it. Why not consolidate all of this into the appropriate places above in the document?	Consolidate this entire section with sections above, and only have the portions not covered in the above as this section. I.E. this needs to be edited. The last two paragraphs seem pertanent to keep, but most of rest needs to be consolidated.	Reject. Due to the format of the document, there is some overlap and redundancy built in. We view it as more stylistic than technical.
4.2.6	T	"Strata should be excavated and screened separately to record provenience and associations of all evidence found." This sentence is struck, but the paragraph needs an intro sentence about screening.	Suggest writing a sentence that says "Relevant sediments from burial locations should be screened to maxize evidnece recovery."	Accept with modification. Sentence added, but changed "should" to "shall."
4.2.6		4.2.6 "cultural stratification" should be "artificial stratification" or "anthropogenic stratification", Similar for "cultural strata"		Accept with modification. The terms natural and cultural were removed.
4.2.7	T	Document the type of smaterial evidence if identifiable. Potentially informative smaterial evidence may include personal effects such as ID cards or jewelry. Why is this sentence unique to "fire scenes?" This should be up much higher in the document in scene processing, so it covers all scenes, not just fire ones.	Move to scene processing section.	Accept with modification. Sentence moved to 4.2.4 Scene Documentation and removed from 4.2.7.
4.2.7	T	"The scene documentation should include the position of the body within the scene (for example (e.g., kitchen or driver's seat), whether the body is believed to have been moved by first responders, forces associated with the incident or destruction of the structure.n" Again, why is this unique to fire scenes?	Move to scene processing section	Reject. Attempted to clarify that this section is specific to anthropological work at fire scenes and is less relevant to surface scatter and burial scenes.

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4.2.8		4.2.8 Sampling it should be specified that samples should be collected before invasive actions such as the us elf wet sieving there is no mention in the report and in the techniques use of how the practitioner should identify and describe the physical and (chrono)logic relations between layers. Also, it should be state how the layers should be identified (e.g. composition, orientation, texture...) and classified. This includes, but is not limited, graves characterized by the "cut" that needs to be distinguished from the "backfill".		Reject. Beyond the scope of this document.
4.3	T	"The process of recovery is unavoidably destructive. During the collection and removal of evidence from scenes, actual spatial relationships and associations between transportable and nontransportable evidence are permanently lost. Context is altered or destroyed during the process of recovery, therefore care shall be taken to document and preserve the scene in keeping with appropriate archaeological and forensic evidence preservation practices and in coordination with the agency in charge." this consideration is paramount and should be much higher in the document, under 4.1 General. It is the reason for doing all of the stuff that is in the document -- archaeology is destructive!	Move to general section.	Reject. We agree that this is important. While location within the document is not correlated to a sentence's importance, we moved the sentence to the beginning of this section.
4.4	T	The Reporting section is problematic. There are no directions on how and where things are reported, who keeps the raw notes/data, how long these things are kept, whether or not it should be digital or hard copy, how things are authenticated, etc. It should indicate the process of identifying the repository of record/agency of record, and that should be decided in advance of closing the process.	This section really needs to be fleshed out appropriately, OR it needs to call to another Standard on "Reporting Requirements" for Anthropology. Since this has no teeth, there is nothing anyone can say if they didn't retain notes, file notes, etc. In general, the reporting section needs work, and I think the WG should examine this in detail. I realize that this is a re-occuring comment, but it can be addressed in each standard, rather than waiting for another standard to be created in 1-3 years.	Reject. This is a recognized issue, and is beyond the scope of this document.