



Psychiatry & Behavioral Sciences Section – 2006

I13 Mass Disasters: Natural and Man Made - The Return of Personal Property After Disaster

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After attending this presentation, attendees will understand the technical and sociological aspects of the return of personal property after worldwide disasters.

This presentation will impact the forensic community and/or humanity by demonstrating best practice methodology for addressing personal property after a mass disaster.

When it comes to the specific details relating to the recovery, processing, and return of personal property to survivors and the bereaved there are varying degrees of understanding about the meaning and significance of personal property and a lack of clarity within and across the various responding organizations about protocols for dealing with such property. This project, in association with leading UK Police Officers, Coroners, charities and government agencies is tackling this with the production of technical advice, guidance leaflets and a Charter of Rights.

Motivated by experiences as a disaster response worker with specialist responsibility for the return of "personal effects" after numerous mass fatality incidents, the researcher initially embarked on an analysis of available literature in this area on both sides of the Atlantic followed by presentations, workshops, and articles to a variety of audiences.

The purpose of this work is to now highlight key issues relating to the treatment and return of personal property and for the AAFS meeting would place this in both a forensic and therapeutic context for those working in a response capacity. The technical elements of the work would be emphasized such as the best practice methodologies used for identification and the critical factors for storage and sensitive process of items (which may be contaminated with fuel, chemicals and blood borne diseases). This issue would also be placed in the wider context of the researcher's ongoing studies into the interlinking of forensic and "human aspects" work.

References:

American Aviation Disaster Family Assistance Act, 1998, including accompanying guidance, material provided by Red Cross, Association of Chief Police Officer Family Assistance.

Return of Personal Property, Disaster, Mass Fatality