



D47 The Scientific Working Group on Disaster Victim Identification

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After attending this presentation, participants will understand the operating structure, purpose, and objectives of the Scientific Working Group on Disaster Victim Identification (SWGdVI).

This presentation will impact the forensic science community by raising awareness of SWGDVI efforts to assemble organizations and individuals to exchange ideas, develop, disseminate, and advance consensus guidelines, best practices, and other recommendations and/or findings relevant to disaster victim identification.

Disaster victim identification (DVI) refers to the component of mass fatality management that involves the scientific identification of human remains. Based on DVI experiences both here and abroad, forensic practitioners in the U.S. voiced the need to assemble professionals from the medicolegal and forensic communities in a collaborative effort to identify and promulgate DVI guidelines and best practices. In response, the National Institute of Justice provided funding to the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) to develop the SWGDVI.

The twenty-five member SWGDVI Board is composed of permanent member agencies/organizations and individual members. Permanent member agencies/organizations are entitled to appoint representatives with subject matter expertise in the broad DVI discipline. Individual members are selected based on individual qualification, not by agency affiliation. The SWGDVI Board consists of fifteen individual members and nine permanent member organizations, including: FBI, National Transportation Safety Board, Department of



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Health and Human Services/Assistant Secretary of Preparedness and Response, Department of Defense/Armed Forces Medical Examiner System, National Association of Medical Examiners, International Association of Coroners and Medical Examiners, INTERPOL DVI Steering Group, International Commission on Missing Persons, and the International Committee of the Red Cross.

The purpose of SWGDVI is to advance the scientific basis for disaster victim identification by assembling professionals from the DVI community, including international participants, in a collaborative effort to exchange ideas regarding scientific analysis methods, protocols, training, and research related to DVI. The SWGDVI will develop, disseminate, and advance consensus guidelines and best practices, studies, and other recommendations and/or findings for DVI, with an emphasis on scientific evidence-based methods with appropriate quality assurance and quality control processes. The SWGDVI shall also encourage and evaluate research and/or innovative technology related to DVI.

To achieve these objectives, the SWGDVI has created committees, which are populated by U.S. and international professionals from the DVI community to examine targeted issues for the purpose of identifying and codifying existing guidelines, or, where clear guidelines do not exist, to formulate guidelines and best practices and disseminate them to the broader forensic community. Currently, the SWGDVI has created the following committees, chaired by Board members and populated by advisory members: Search and Recovery, Pathology, Anthropology, Odontology, Friction Ridge Analysis, Molecular Biology/DNA, Data Management, Identification Data Synthesis and Quality Control, Victim Information Center/Family Assistance Center, and DVI Management.

The SWGDVI is not, by its chartering instrument, a regulatory body with any formal enforcement authority. The SWGDVI bylaws specifically state that the SWGDVI promulgates best practices and guidelines, but not standards, because of the real or perceived notion that standards are enforceable. Essential to the successful promulgation of guidelines and best practices is general acceptance (i.e., consensus, by the international DVI community). To foster community input, committees are comprised of advisory members selected for specific knowledge and experience in the relevant subject matter areas. Advisory members are encouraged to participate in drafting proposals/products for review by the SWGDVI Board. Committees are also encouraged to solicit input and receive commentary from members of the DVI community that are not directly involved with SWGDVI. All SWGDVI draft products are posted on the SWGDVI website (www.swgdvi.org) for public comment before formal adoption. The public is encouraged to submit comments and propose changes to SWGDVI products at any time, either through direct contact with the SWGDVI Board, relevant committees, or through the feedback forum on the SWGDVI website. Additionally, the SWGDVI will forward proposed documents to relevant professional organizations for input.

This session will provide a general overview of SWGDVI and will present summaries of draft guidelines to the forensic community for review and discussion.

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