



Odontology Section - 2016

G34 Paradise Ablaze 6-2-6: Dental Identification of Charred Human Remains

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After attending this presentation, attendees will better understand the utility of dental identification of six charred human remains recovered from two house fires, which occurred at a six-year time interval.

This presentation will impact the forensic science community by demonstrating the durability of teeth to withstand the temperatures of house fires and by manifesting the value of dental identification of charred human remains recovered from two house fires which occurred on a barrier island in southwest Florida.

On Saturday, April 25, 2009, at approximately 2:30 a.m., a house fire erupted on Privateer Road on Palm Island, FL. An island volunteer fire truck and county fire boats responded, but the home was destroyed. Four charred bodies were recovered from the scene, and each body maintained dental evidence that survived the temperatures of the fire. The medical examiner requested that the forensic odontologist conduct dental examinations for the purpose of identification. Positive identification of three of the four bodies was accomplished using dental records.

Six years later, on May 24, 2015, at approximately 2:30 a.m., a house fire erupted on Gulf Shore Boulevard on Palm Island, FL. One island fire truck responded and additional emergency equipment and responders were ferried to the island. By the time fire trucks arrived, the home was engulfed in flames and was completely destroyed. Two charred bodies recovered from the scene were transported to the office of the medical examiner. The forensic odontologist performed dental examinations for the purpose of identification, and both bodies were positively identified using dental records.

The barrier islands of southwest Florida support secluded second homes and have beautiful beaches, spectacular sea shells, and sensational sunsets; however, this pristine paradise is not immune to disaster when house fires erupt and paradise is set ablaze.

This presentation will demonstrate the survivability of dental evidence in severely burned human remains recovered from barrier island house fires. Antemortem and postmortem radiographs of the decedents will be presented. The value of dental identification in charred human remains when antemortem dental records are available for comparison will be apparent in these case presentations.

Dental Identification, Charred Human Remains, Dental Evidence