



### **E95 Forensic Archaeology Matters: Methods, Differentiation From and Contributions to, Other Forensic Strategies in Crime Scene Investigation**

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After attending this presentation, attendees will better understand how forensic archaeology and its methodology is differentiated from general archaeology, forensic anthropology, and other forensic methods. This presentation will familiarize attendees with the unique contribution to crime scene investigations that forensic archaeology offers. In general, most crime scene investigation training does not address approaches to and strategies employed with regard to variable environmental factors, human and animal behaviors, and the impact these have on clandestine burials and body dumps. Outdoor settings present a unique set of challenges that call for a unique methodology toward reconstructing the crime scene and collecting evidence that training for indoor crime scene investigation does not typically address.

This presentation will impact the forensic science community by demonstrating the value of forensic archaeology and archaeological techniques to criminal investigations broadly. While archaeological methods have long been employed by forensic anthropologists in body recovery, the same methods utilized by archaeologists have direct applications to all crime scene examination and reconstruction. The recognition of forensic archaeology as a specialty beyond burial excavation will encourage greater incorporation of archaeologists into the forensic community.

This presentation will demonstrate that forensic archaeology is more than simply a learned skill set of technical knowledge for creating grids, excavation, and mapping a crime scene. Forensic archaeologists have an in-depth knowledge of landscapes and seasonal, and environmental changes that affect artifact deposition and distribution (which includes the body) over time in multivariable site formation processes. The value of this in-depth knowledge toward determining the proper approach to each body recovery scene and for contributing to understanding victim and perpetrator interaction in the death event and disposal cannot be overstated. Forensic archaeology emphasizes contextual relationships within an environment and among the evidence of human activity. This fundamental framework of “context” enables a holistic approach to evidence interpretation.

Forensic archaeology in concert with other forensic methodologies offers unique value toward reconstructing the crime scene and/or the deposition of the body, collection methods of artifacts that preserve evidentiary integrity, reconstructing timelines, and working with law enforcement, coroner, and medical examiners’ offices *before* the human remains and its associated artifacts are delivered and analyzed in a laboratory setting. Improper handling of the outdoor crime scene can be deleterious to compiling evidence and data for courtroom proceedings and should not be left to those who do not have the academic background and knowledge of a forensic archaeologist.

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#### **Forensic Archaeology, Crime Scene Investigation, Methods**