



### **E123 Interagency Cooperation in the Recovery of Human Cremains and Human Remains**

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**Learning Overview:** After attending this presentation, attendees will understand what encompasses an incident action plan, how decedents are most commonly identified at the Washington, DC, Office of the Chief Medical Examiner (OCME), and the challenges faced when a funeral home is closed indefinitely.

**Impact on the Forensic Science Community:** This presentation will impact the forensic science community by shedding light on a seldom-discussed topic: the closing of a funeral home and the role of the medical examiner therein. This presentation will also provide an overview of the way the DC OCME notified and interacted with next of kin as well as assisted with the reunification of families.

The Washington, DC, Office of the Chief Medical Examiner partnered with the DC Office of the Attorney General (OAG) and the United States Marshals Service in a small-scale operation involving the recovery of more than 100 cremains and several non-cremated human remains from a funeral home that was closing in Washington, DC. The operation was conducted over the course of two days, one day in November and one day in December of the 2017 calendar year. There was intensive preparation prior to the recovery, and this presentation will highlight the preparation, logistics, and field cataloging process.

This presentation will include an overview of the method the DC OCME used to identify cremains and the limitations this process exposed. This presentation will highlight challenges faced in an effort to assist other medical examiner/coroner offices who may encounter similar situations. Attendees will be provided with the methodology behind creating a field cataloging process, as well as an overview of the comprehensive Microsoft® Excel® spreadsheet created by the DC OCME to properly document, triage, and analyze the cremains and non-cremated human remains recovered during this small-scale operation. Additionally, a time-line will be provided to further assist in visualizing the long-standing effects such an operation can have on a medical examiner/coroner office, the other agencies involved, and the community as a whole (to include the next of kin).

This presentation will also impact the forensic science community by discussing interagency cooperation among organizations within three regions: the District of Columbia, the Commonwealth of Virginia, and the state of Maryland. Finally, this presentation will impact the forensic science community by encouraging other agencies to become aware of the possibility that they too may be called upon to assist in such a recovery mission.

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#### **Interagency Cooperation, Human Cremains, Family Reunification**