

OSAC is Back! (OSAC = Organization of Scientific Area Committees)

NAME OSAC UPDATE #6: OSAC 2022-S-0022

Standard for Disaster Victim Identification

This Best Practice Recommendation was developed by the OSAC DVI Task Group within the Medicolegal Death Investigation Subcommittee. This standard has been submitted to a Standards Development Organization (SDO), and likely will be revised during the standards development process. As a standard, the document describes required processes. This OSAC document should be useful to NAME members in developing, evaluating, or revising mass fatality incident plans.

This is a brief summary of OSAC 2022-S-0022, and as such may leave out or misinterpret important details. See link to full document (below).

SCOPE: To provide a standard to make accurate decedent identifications when responding to mass fatality incidents.

The **Forward** describes accuracy of identification as a foundational principle in mass fatality operations.

In the **General Section:** Some stakeholders, such as the media, may try to pressure to cause the premature release of victim identifications. “Visual identification, without scientific confirmation, is insufficient for DVI operations.” And “When multiple scientific (identification) modalities are used, each shall be reviewed and approved independently.” The terms and phrases: “individualization”, “100 percent level of certainty”, “scientific certainty”, and “positive identification” are not to be used.

Phases of Disaster Victim Identification

1. Data Collection: Antemortem data from the Family Assistance Center, and Postmortem data from discipline-specific experts such as odontologists, pathologists, and anthropologists.
2. Comparison and Discipline-Specific Preliminary Identification. By comparing antemortem and postmortem data to obtain a discipline-specific preliminary identification. The medicolegal authority (usually medical examiner or coroner) **shall** determine which identification

modalities are best suited to each specific incident. Quality control and assurance reviews **shall** be part of discipline-specific identification processes.

3. Reconciliation and Consensus: The jurisdiction's mass fatality plan **may** direct that a committee be established for performing reconciliation. Committee membership **shall** include all of the disciplines involved in the identification process. This committee **shall** recommend that the proposed identification is 1) rejected, 2) inconclusive pending additional data/information or 3) accepted.
4. Formal Approval: The medicolegal authority shall approve or reject the identification, and then sends any rejected identification for further investigation/testing.

In the **Open or Closed Population** section the utilization of scientific modalities for identification is again required, with a note that elimination may be useful for the process of identification in a closed population.

The standard also has sections on **Fragmented Remains** and **Use of Statistics and Probabilities**

Full Document: <https://www.nist.gov/document/osac-2022-s-0022-standard-disaster-victim-identification-version-20>