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Mass Fatality Incident Data Management: Best Practice Recommendation for the Medicolegal Authority

This best practice document was begun by the Scientific Working Group on Disaster Victim Identification (SWGDVI) and put forth by the Medicolegal Death Investigation Subcommittee Disaster Victim Identification Task Group of OSAC.   It has been submitted to a standards development organization and may change as it undergoes revisions in that consensus based process.

*This is a brief summary of O*SAC 2024-N-0008, and as such may leave out or misinterpret important details. **See link to full document (below).**

Value: As a best practice document, recommendations, not requirements are described in the document. However, it provides an extremely helpful framework in developing a plan for fatality data management and could be provided to the jurisdiction's information technology group. The tables at the end of the document are excellent summaries/checklists of the entire document and serve as a stand-alone resource.

SCOPE: The document reconciles general digital management standards with the extensive requirements of a DVI data management system. DVI data management systems are more specific to the goals of decedent identification during a mass fatality incident.

DATA MANAGEMENT REQUIREMENTS (Abbreviated):

1. **Data Collection** Should facilitate validation, exchange, analysis, and reporting of data and enhance efforts to achieve identifications.
2. **Data Ownership** Multi-agency cooperation may necessitate the sharing of data. The archival repository and access to DVI data must be established ahead of time.

3. **Data Security and Confidentiality** Access to DVI data management systems should be credentialed. Access should be permission based and audited.
4. **Data Storage and Retention** Should mitigate data breaches and silos that complicate DVI response.
5. **Data Verification/Validation** "Quality reviews should be performed to assess the accuracy and completeness of the data."
6. **Data Compatibility** Data should adhere to common digital data exchange standards.
7. **Data Reporting** Provides needed stakeholder information while ensuring confidentiality for victims and their families.
8. **Data Exchange** Addresses the policies and data format standards necessary for data compatibility between systems.
9. **Data Management System Components** Specific capabilities facilitate effective DVI data management. Often when the DVI surge is over, still unidentified remains will be incorporated into the daily case management.

Antemortem DVI Data includes the need to track unaccounted for persons:

- Mass fatality incidents typically result in a surge of reports of unaccounted for persons.
- The data management system should determine ahead of time what information should be collected in reports of unaccounted for persons. (This document includes a suggested minimum data set.)
- The process of collecting data on unaccounted for person should provide for internet-based reporting by families and community members.
- A single unaccounted for persons database should integrate reports from the internet, investigative agencies, hospitals, etc.
- A list management function facilitates detection and resolution of duplicate unaccounted for persons reports.

- Cases can be marked as found or identified to provide accurate status when queries are made.

Victim Identification Data "Effective data management should include reconciliation, and the ability to search fields, recognize body part duplication, and suggest exclusions."

Fatality Surveillance Enables the acquisition and consolidation of data from a variety of sources to estimate incident-related fatalities.

DVI-Relevant Data Exchange Standards Should be applied to DVI data management. An example is ANSI-NIST Special Publication 500-290, *Data Format for the Interchange of Fingerprint, Facial, and Other Biometric Information*. The ANSI-NIST document addresses the biometric data often used in disaster victim identification. **See table 9 for other applicable standards.**

Full Document:

https://www.nist.gov/document/osac-2024-n-0008-mass-fatality-incident-data-management-best-practice-recommendation