

Annexure 13:

INTERPOL Guidance: Numbering in Disaster Victim Identification Operations

Source: INTERPOL DVI Working Group

Annexure 13: Numbering in Disaster Victim Identification Operations

A deceased disaster victim's body or any separate body parts should be allocated a unique number at the scene; this number will stay with the remains and any related personal property that can be clearly attributed to the victim. It will be used on all documentation and samples throughout the disaster victim identification investigation.

A simple numbering system has evolved through various DVI operations and recommendations to the INTERPOL Standing Committee on DVI, as shown below:

Post Mortem	Country Code	Number	Scene Reference
PM	44	0025	A

The example shown above is explained:

Post Mortem

PM – Post Mortem (Latin, meaning after death), this indicates that this number refers to the remains of a deceased disaster victim: the 'PM number.'

Country Code

44 – The telephone country code is used to indicate the country dealing with this part of the DVI operation; countries have two figure or three figure telephone country codes. Letter codes are not used as a label bearing the name of an individual country on a disaster victim's body, may cause tensions in politically sensitive situations.

In the event of a large operation where DVI teams from other countries are providing humanitarian assistance, this code will simply identify the origin of the team that has recovered the disaster victim's body.

The host country may prefer to issue all PM numbers bearing its own code; this must be clearly communicated to teams from countries providing assistance at the commencement of operations.

A small number of countries share the same country code, Canada and the United States of America share the telephone code '1.'

Russia and Kazakhstan share the telephone code '7.'

A simple solution is to use 1C for Canada and 1U for the United States of America. The code 7R would be used for Russia and 7K for Kazakhstan.

Number

0025 – The number allocated to the deceased disaster victim. The zeros are added in order to aid searching on computer based spread sheets or DVI matching software, this ensures that lists of numbers are displayed in the correct order. Four digits allows for up to 9,999 victims' bodies or body parts. If the numbers are expected to exceed 10,000 an extra zero should be inserted (00025).

Scene Reference

It is advised to use a scene reference for investigations, particularly where there are multiple disaster scenes being dealt with within the same DVI operation. Letters or a number should be added to indicate from which scene the disaster victim was recovered. This can help to prevent cross contamination of evidence between crime scenes and will greatly assist reconciliation investigators, who can see immediately from the PM number, which scene that a disaster victims remains were recovered from.

Use a letter or a number to identify scenes as A, B, C or 1, 2, 3 etc. as in the example, below where 'A' has been recorded to show that this is 'Scene A.'

Post Mortem	Country Code	Number	Scene Reference
PM	44	0025	A

Previous DVI operations have also used abbreviations to represent a specific location. In the example used below 'HS' has been added to indicate that this particular scene is 'High Street.'

Post Mortem	Country Code	Number	Scene Reference
PM	44	0025	HS

Any additional numbers or codes that are routinely required by countries as part of their own investigative processes should always be added after the PM number. This could be a sector reference, or the number of a sample or item of evidence, for example:

PM44-0025-A-Sector 4

PM44-0025-A-Sample 2

PM44-0025-A-Evidence item 21

DVI Labels

Labels used for a DVI operation should be produced on moisture proof material, or strongly protected with clear plastic. Metal plates have been used on some DVI operations. The label should be securely fastened to the disaster victim's remains. Each body or body part should be issued with a separate unique PM number.

The Online Disaster Victim Recovery Form uses this numbering system. This can be downloaded from the INTERPOL website:

<http://www.interpol.int/INTERPOL-expertise/Forensics/DVI-Pages/Disaster-victim-recovery-form>

Many countries use hard copy pre-numbered versions of this document in a booklet format.

If two or more body parts at a scene are believed to be linked, a note should be made on each Disaster Victim Recovery Form to clearly cross reference the PM numbers.

Bar Codes

Increasingly, as technology has developed, bar codes are used on labels to track body bags containing the remains of disaster victims, their property and associated hard copy files. The bar code must include the PM number.

Ante Mortem Numbers

The principal of the PM numbering system can also be applied to missing person documentation and Ante Mortem DVI Forms:

Ante Mortem	Country Code	Number
AM	31	0006

Ante Mortem

AM - Ante Mortem (Latin, meaning before death) is used to indicate that this is the number of a missing person: the 'AM number.'

Country Code

31 – The telephone country code is used to indicate which country is handling the missing person case and providing Ante Mortem information to assist the investigation.

Number

0006 – A number allocated to the missing person. Again, the zeros are added in order to aid searching on spread sheets or DVI matching software, this ensures that lists of numbers are displayed in the correct order. Any additional numbers required should be added after the AM number, for example: AM31-0006-Sample 1 Within both AM and PM aspects of the investigation, strict care must be taken to ensure that the same number is not issued more than once.

DVI Software and Computer Based Spread sheets

When entering numbers onto DVI matching software or spread sheets numbers should be written as in the examples below:

AM31-0006

PM44-0025

PM44-0025-HS

Please note that no space is inserted, the dash used does not require use of the shift key on a computer keyboard.

If the numbers of missing persons, victim's bodies or body parts are likely to be in excess of 10,000 an extra zero should be inserted, for example:

AM31-00006

PM44-00025

PM44-00025-A

Quality Assurance

A review process must be established to ensure compliance and accuracy.

Throughout the DVI operation, great care must be taken in to ensure that the same AM or PM number is not issued more than once.

Care must also be taken when interpreting handwritten numbers and transferring them to other documents or spread sheets, for example: a handwritten number '1' being mistakenly interpreted as a number '7.'

Avoid photocopying pink PM