

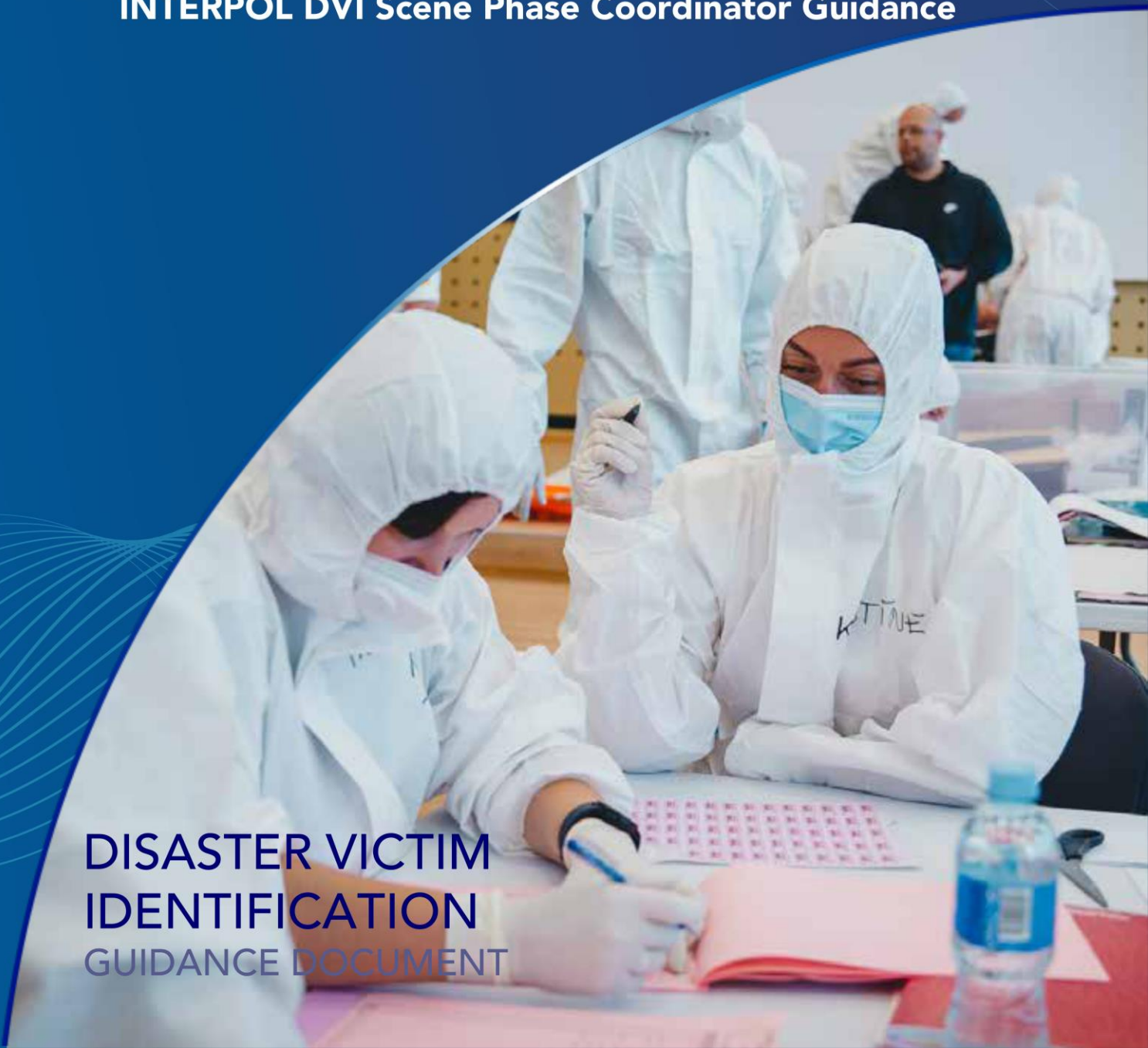


INTERPOL

INTERPOL DVI - RESPECT TOWARDS VICTIMS PROTOCOL

INTERPOL DVI Scene Phase Coordinator Guidance

DISASTER VICTIM
IDENTIFICATION
GUIDANCE DOCUMENT



INTERPOL DVI - RESPECT TOWARDS VICTIMS PROTOCOL

Purpose

To ensure that all victims in a Disaster Victim Identification (DVI) operation are treated with dignity, respect, and sensitivity to cultural, religious, and gender considerations throughout the process. This includes all stages of recovery, handling, examination, storage, and return to families, while maintaining forensic integrity and chain of custody requirements.

Scope

This protocol applies to all personnel involved in DVI operations, including forensic experts (such as forensic odontologists, pathologists, anthropologists, and radiologists), police officers, mortuary staff, and any partner agencies involved in the handling of deceased victims.

It is applicable in both national and international (multinational) DVI operations.

Guiding Principles

1. Dignity at all times – Victims shall be treated as human beings with inherent dignity, while acknowledging their role within a forensic investigation.
2. Preservation of identity – All procedures shall ensure accurate identification, prevent commingling or loss of remains and maintain full traceability and chain of custody.
3. Cultural, religious, and gender sensitivity – Procedures shall take into account relevant cultural, religious, and gender considerations, where operationally feasible and without compromising forensic requirements.
4. Transparency – Families have the right to clear, accurate, and timely information, within the limits of legal and investigative constraints.
5. Professionalism and ethical conduct – All personnel shall maintain composure, compassion, confidentiality, and adherence to ethical and professional standards at all times.

Procedures for Respectful Handling

At the Recovery Scene

- Human remains shall be protected from public view using appropriate measures (e.g. screens, body bags, or tents).
- A designated Scene Dignity Officer may be appointed to monitor compliance with ethical and respectful practices.
- Photography of remains shall only be conducted when required for identification, documentation, or evidentiary purposes, in accordance with legal and operational protocols. All images must be securely stored and access-controlled.
- Where culturally or religiously required and operationally feasible, gender-appropriate personnel should be assigned to handle remains.

Transport

- Human remains shall be placed in appropriate, clean, and properly labeled body bags with unique identifiers.

- Full traceability shall be maintained throughout transport, including documentation.
- Transport shall occur directly to the designated mortuary facility with minimal delay.
- Remains shall not be stored or transported in unsuitable or non-secure environments.

Mortuary Procedures

- Human remains shall be handled with care, using appropriate lifting techniques, and in accordance with health and safety requirements.
- Remains shall remain covered when not under direct examination.
- Functional separation of work areas (e.g., examination, cleaning, administrative) shall be maintained.
- Cultural, religious, and gender considerations shall be respected where feasible, including privacy measures and staff allocation.

Cultural, Religious, and Gender Considerations

- Cultural, religious, and gender advisors should be consulted where available.
- Practices such as body orientation, covering, and burial timing should be respected when compatible with forensic requirements.
- Operational decisions shall be documented where deviations from cultural practices occur.
- In cases of conflict, forensic and legal obligations shall take precedence; however, these must be clearly and respectfully explained to family representatives.

Communication with Families Regarding Victims' Remains

- A trained Family Liaison Officer or qualified professional, such as psychologist, shall be assigned to support families.
- Families shall be informed in a clear, accurate, and sensitive manner about identification processes and procedures.
- Prior to viewing, families shall be prepared regarding the condition of remains.
- Viewing shall take place in a private, quiet and appropriate setting.
- Communication shall avoid graphic descriptions and use clear, respectful, and culturally appropriate language, balancing accuracy with sensitivity.

Confidentiality and Data Protection

- All information, images, and data related to human remains shall be treated as strictly confidential.
- Access shall be restricted to authorized personnel within the official chain of custody.
- Unauthorized disclosure, including social media or informal communication channels, is strictly prohibited.
- Data handling shall comply with applicable data protection regulations (e.g., GDPR where applicable), including secure storage and controlled access.

Training Requirements

All DVI personnel should receive training in:

- Respect and dignity in handling human remains
- Cultural, religious, and gender sensitivity
- Ethical decision-making in forensic contexts

Training should include scenario-based exercises.

Competency assessment and periodic refresher training are recommended.

Reporting, Complaints, and Accountability

- A formal mechanism for reporting breaches of dignity, respect, or ethical conduct shall be established.
- Reports may be submitted confidentially through the DVI command structure.
- All reports shall be documented, reviewed in a timely manner, and subject to appropriate corrective actions.
- Accountability structures should be clearly defined.

Evaluation, Oversight, and Ethical Performance Indicators

- Where implemented Scene Dignity Officers shall submit post-operation reports.
- Structured debriefings shall be conducted to identify gaps and reinforce best practices.
- Ethical Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) should be established and may include:
 - Compliance with dignity and respect to protocols.
 - Adherence to cultural, religious, and gender considerations.
 - Proper management of confidentiality and data.
 - Quality and timeliness of family communication.
- KPI's shall be measurable and used to support continuous improvement, training updates, and operational accountability.

Annex A: Respectful Language Examples

Use: "Victim," "Deceased," "Remains."

Avoid: Slang or dehumanizing terms ("body parts," "corpse").

Annex B: Scene Privacy Checklist

- Physical barriers or screens in place
- Media access controlled and restricted
- No unauthorized photography
- Secure perimeter established