

**ANNEXURE-P18****SUGGESTIONS TO THE HON'BLE SUPREME COURT FOR  
IMPROVED GUIDELINES IN MANAGEMENT OF DEAD BODIES  
IN DISASTER SITUATION AKIN TO THAT OF COVID -19 AND  
BETTER MANAGEMENT OF PRESENT SITUATION.****1. ALLOCATING A UNIQUE CODE TO THE DEAD BODIES –**

To avoid loss of bodies, to ensure correct documentation and traceability, and to help identify dead bodies, a unique code must be allocated to each body.

- Assign a unique code (it should include text and a sequential number) to each body or body part.
- Unique body codes must not be duplicated.
- Prior agreement on a standard approach to creating unique body codes is recommended
- The unique code assigned to a body should be more than a simple number. It should be a combination of text and a number in order to avoid duplication and confusion.

**2. TAKING PHOTOGRAPHS AND RECORDING DATA FROM DEAD BODIES –**

a) In a large scale it may take several days or longer for forensic experts to be mobilized, it will be first responders who will have the early opportunities to take valuable photographs and collect and record data from the dead bodies. These valuable opportunities will be lost as the bodies decompose and easy identification of the victims in these instances will be increasingly challenging.

- The importance of early photography prior to the onset of decomposition cannot be overstated. If at all possible, the photographs of the body should be taken as soon as the unique body code is allocated, at the time of recovery of the body. This is likely to be the single most important contribution enabling the body to be identified.

- Clean the **body** sufficiently to allow facial features and clothing to be properly represented in the photographs
- If circumstances permit, or at a later time, additional photographs, with the unique **code**, can be included of the following:
  - the **upper** part of the body
  - the **lower** part of the body
  - **side views** of the face
  - any personal belongings

b) Basic data about the dead body, such as his/her general condition, state of preservation, physical characteristics and external appearance, must be collected as soon as possible. While realising that often it will be difficult, every effort should be made to do this before the onset of decomposition.

- Any personal belongings or other materials clearly associated with a single body should remain with the body, placed in the body bag or container, and recorded under the unique body code.<sup>8</sup> By doing this, the risk of personal effects being lost or misplaced is minimized.
- Always record the following data, together with the unique body code:
  - sex (if recognizable without full body search)
  - approximate age range (infant, child, adolescent, adult or elderly)
  - Personal belongings (jewellery, clothes, identity card, driver's licence, etc.)
  - obvious specific marks on the skin (e.g. tattoos, scars, birthmarks) without removing clothes
  - Any obvious deformity.
- Also record:
  - Height
  - Colour and length of hair
  - Obvious dental features.
- After examination, recording and photographing of personal belongings from the body, these should be left on the body or in the clothing where they were found.

- Clothing should be left on the body.

### 3. TEMPORARY STORAGE OF DEAD BODIES

Following a disaster which overwhelms normal response capacity, the ability to process bodies quickly is lost. This means that storing bodies temporarily may be necessary. The aim of temporary storage of dead bodies is to be respectful, to preserve and protect the bodies as best as possible, and to improve the chance of identification. Within 12–48 hours in hot climates, decomposition may be too advanced to allow facial recognition.

- Whichever storage option is used, each body or body part should be kept in a body bag or similar storage item before storage.
- Waterproof labels or paper in sealed plastic with the unique body code should be used. Do not write the unique body code directly on bodies or body bags/sheets only as it may be easily erased, or the sheet separated from the body, during storage.
- The preferred storage option is refrigerated containers which should be placed in a suitable location (e.g. as part of a collection centre).
- If refrigerated containers are not available, the preferred options are: i) orderly storage in a protected location that is as cold as possible (not in direct sunlight and preferably under cover); or ii) temporary burial.

#### ➤ TEMPORARY BURIAL

- Temporary burial, following allocation of the unique body code, taking photographs and completion of the Dead Body Information Form, provides a good option for early storage where no other method is available, where longer-term temporary storage is needed and where it does not conflict with cultural norms.
- The underground temperature is usually lower than that at the surface, thereby providing a form of natural cooling and protection, including from scavengers
- Temporary burial sites should be constructed in the following way to help ensure future location and recovery of bodies: \*Use individual graves for a small number of