



April 26 to May 2, 2009
Supporting, Connecting, Evolving

**National Crime Victim Awareness
Week**

**Disaster Victim Identification
Unit
(DVI)**

Overview



- Role of the Coroner
- Disaster Victim Identification (DVI)
- Roles & Responsibilities of the Coroner - Mass Fatality Incident
- Purpose – Family Liaison Centre
- Bridging Opportunities with Police-Based Victim Service Workers in BC

Coroner – Traditional Investigative Role

- Who? - Identify the deceased
- When? - Date & time
- Where? - Place
- How? - Cause of death
- By what means? - Events leading to cause of death
- Classification - Natural, homicide, accident, suicide, undetermined
- Prevention of death
- Make appropriate recommendations



Disaster Victim Identification

- DVI's piece of the puzzle
 - Unit mandate is to positively identify decedents & provide efficient, effective disaster response





- Background
 - Consequence of other activities
 - new forensic identification technology
 - missing women investigation
 - case management reviews
 - Helped identify necessity for specialized identification unit

DVI

- Key Activities
 - Recent focus has been on identification -cold case files
 - DVI is a support service
 - Historical & current U/I remains investigations, irrespective of cause of death
 - Policy development, implementation of new technology
 - Disaster Response



Disaster Response Coordinator

- New position within the BCSS
 - Disaster Response Coordinator
 - October 15, 2007

DVI Mantra

- Prepare
 - in the event of a mass fatality incident, execute a plan that is already in place
- Adapt
 - each incident has its own complexities & requires adaptation to a certain degree
- Succeed
 - Change basic plan accordingly; as & when required

Using “Lessons Learned” to Prepare

- Strategic focus on preparedness is vital to an agency
 - Preparedness directly determines success of the response
 - Identifies weaknesses & gaps
 - Enables intelligent research to ascertain where BCCS can grow, change, & adapt to be better prepared

Tsunami SE Asia Dec 26, 2004

- Findings or recommendations of interest
 - Consider & develop National Disaster Relief Policy & contingency plan
 - Develop community response programs for natural disasters (e.g.: Red Cross)



Tsunami SE Asia Dec 26, 2004

- Particular findings & recommendations of interest
 - Roles & responsibilities not properly recognized
 - Overlap b/w government agencies
 - Access to & availability of specialized equipment e.g. field morgues, locations to bury
 - Need for efficient exhibit tracking system
 - Secondments of UN workers too short



Hurricane Katrina – Missing Persons

- As of February, 2006, 2096 people from the Gulf Coast area were still reported as missing
 - Need compatible, inter-changeable databases to compare missing persons vs. unidentified remains



Information & Communication



- Dead & missing persons
- As much information as possible is recorded
- Management of information is most important; if details are mismanaged, failure is imminent
- Controlling information re dead & missing is mandatory for matching unidentified decedents to known information about a decedent or to a missing persons query

Information & Communication

- Need information centres at a Mass Facility Incident
- Focal points for public, next of kin, media



Communication & Media

- The goal is victim recovery & positive ID
- Working with, not against, the media
 - Maintain ethical & responsible channels of communication



Communication & Media

- Use a media-liaison
- Good media relations reduce inaccurate reporting
 - be clear, timely & up-to-date



Support for Families

- Be honest about recovery & identification process
 - timeframes & realistic expectations
- Be accurate with details & information
- Have respect for decedent & grieving family
- Respect cultural & religious practices
- Place for NOK to gather



Coroner's Response to a MFI

- Coroners are not first responders
- Preservation of life & rescue efforts are the 1st priority
 - with protection of property
- Coroners manage the dead
 - considered as secondary responders



Coroner's Attendance at a MFI

- Duties do not 'kick in' until initial 'chaos' subsided
- Start working to establish
 - where "temporary morgue" would be situated
 - How, where bodies stored until have control of site to conduct examinations in a safe environment



Coroner's Attendance at a MFI

- The Coroners Act gives a coroner the authority to utilize police, EHS, forensic specialists as 'Agents' if required



Disaster Victim Identification-DVI BC & Incident Command System-ICS

- Interpol (DVI)
- Incident Command System
- Guiding principles for BCCS Disaster Response & Disaster Victim Identification

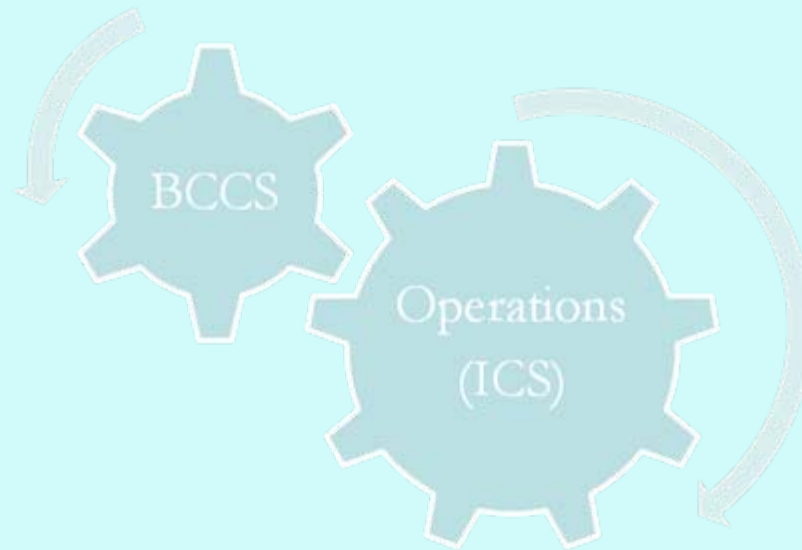


Interpol - DVI

- BCCS has implemented the Interpol DVI system in part
 - Post mortem (pink)....Ante mortem (yellow) forms
 - Process of identification of decedents

Coroners Role - MFI

- The Incident Command System (ICS) assists with inter-agency coordination
- The BCCS is a 'cog' in the wheel of the ICS.



Definitions ICS



- The ‘Incident Command System (ICS)’ is a model for command, control & coordination of emergency response at an emergency site. It provides a way of coordinating the efforts of agencies and resources as they work together toward safely responding, controlling and mitigating the emergency incident

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3 Main Responsibilities - MFI

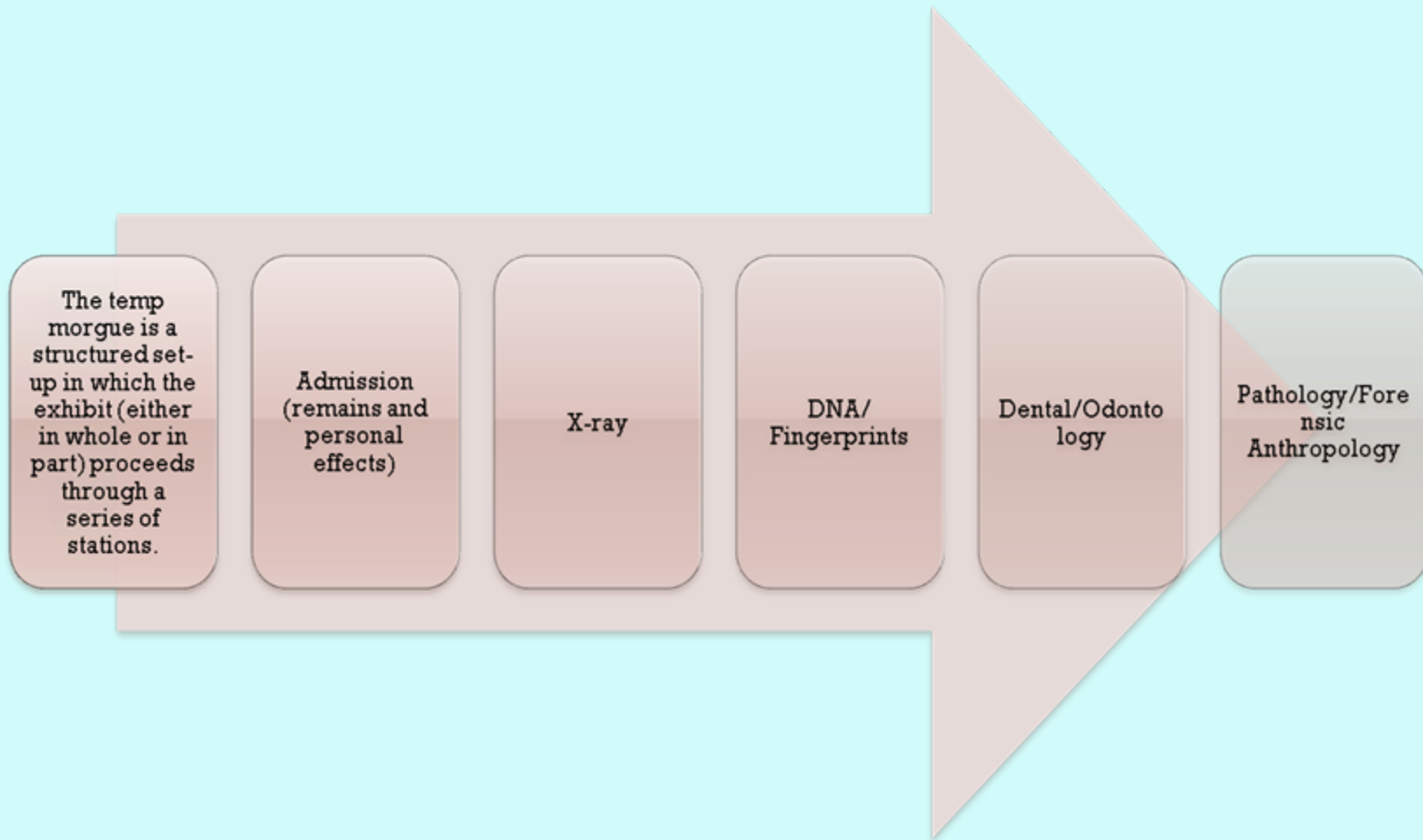
1. The scene
2. The temporary morgue
3. The “Family Liaison Centre”

The Scene

- Processing of the physical site
- Recovery of human remains & personal effects
- Exhibit numbers given for each separate exhibit & placed in a body bag. The number assigned is important for the documentation & continuity trail



The Temporary Morgue



The Temporary Morgue

- Ultimate goal is to identify the decedent & return the remains to the next of kin or family for final disposition

The Temporary Morgue

- Admission
 - Tracker assigned to accompany remains to each station in the temporary morgue
 - Clothing, personal effects &/or other physical evidence seized at this station
 - Tracker carries the pink post mortem Disaster Victim Identification (DVI) package with them until examinations/analyses complete

The Temporary Morgue

- X-ray
 - All remains x-rayed
 - Looking for trauma, injury, identifiers
- DNA
 - Blood, buccal, tissue, bone
- Dental/Odontology:
 - X-ray, charting, identifiers
- Pathology/Forensic Anthropology
 - COD, identifiers

The Temporary Morgue

- When each station has been attended & signed off, the tracker will ensure that the remains are checked back in through Admissions & the pink Disaster Victim Identification (DVI) Package is given to the Documentation Section





Next Steps

- Working towards making disaster plans operational
- Realization that assistance is required
- Goal
 - Train & deploy teams of security-cleared volunteers to assist with certain aspects of disaster response



Family Liaison Centre- ILC

- BCCS is responsible for operating the ILC
- Imperative all agencies work together toward the common goal of victim identification.



- Modular organization
 - ILC expands & contracts according to the size, magnitude & complexity of the incident



Family Liaison Centre- FLC

- Establishment of an FLC following a MFI ensures families of disaster victims provided with accurate information in appropriate & timely manner
- FLC used to conduct interviews with family members & collect ante mortem information on presumed dead/confirmed dead persons e.g.: plane crash victims

Family Liaison Centre- ILC

- Appropriate place to have family members provide the coroner with a DNA sample
 - for comparison with recovered human remains



ILC-What BCCS Needs



- Roles required to be filled:
 - Volunteer Management Branch Coordinator
 - Keep track of volunteer needs, shifts, schedules & oversee operations
 - Person would continually liaise with & report to FLC Manager (Coroner)

Roles



- Meet & Greet Supervisor
 - Meet families, next of kin as they arrive & ascertain which station they need to attend

Roles



- Registration Supervisor & staff
 - Sign families, next of kin in at registration
 - Determine if DNA sample needs to be taken
 - Collection of ante mortem information (decedent)
 - Interpol Yellow forms

Roles



- ESS Liaison/Referrals
 - If needs of family can't be met by FLC staff, this person will assist in finding the appropriate agency to assist



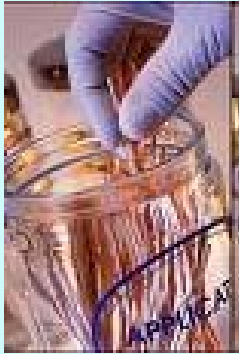
Roles

- Safety Officer
 - To oversee OHS issues of staff, volunteers
 - To call, liaise with police and/or coroner if OHS situation arises with respect to the FLC
 - Reports to the Volunteer Management Branch Coordinator & FLC Manager (Coroner



Roles

- Briefing Room Liaison
 - To assist in the briefing room for new announcements made to family members by the FLC Manager (Coroner)
 - Is often very emotional time for families
 - especially during first week



Roles

- DNA Liaison
 - If family member is required to submit his or her DNA (if decedent DNA not available), this person will help facilitate process
 - This position still under development



Roles

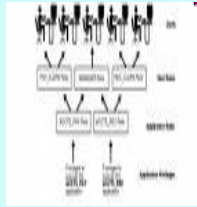
- Comfort Room Liaison
 - Some families will attend the ILC after they have been notified that their loved one has been identified forensically
 - To get further details, they will attend ILC
 - Require private room for follow-up conversations, briefings with coroner



Roles

- Transportation
 - Drive family members to from ILC, if required
 - Assist police and/or coroner if support person needed at a death notification
 - May be required to travel to residence or hotel room of family member
 - All nok notifications shall be attempted to be done in person and not over the phone

Roles

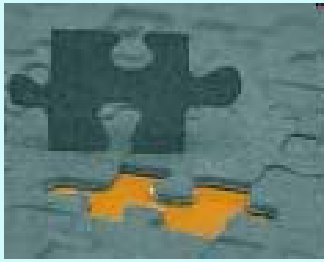


- Other!
 - Room for more.
 - Many more potential roles to be filled depending on the incident

Developments

- Currently building an ILC Operational Manual
 - Purpose of the ILC
 - How to set up the ILC
 - How to staff the ILC
 - Defining roles & responsibilities of ILC personnel
 - How to deactivate & take-down the ILC





Building the Bridge

- Police Victim Service Workers:
 - have police clearance
 - well trained
 - comfortable dealing with victims of crime & trauma
 - many victim service workers wear two hats
 - e.g. VS & ESS

Thank you!

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