

MANAGEMENT OF CONTAMINATED REMAINS

Figure 1. Sample Broken Arrow Human Remains Transport, Autopsy and Mortuary Affairs Special Instructions Form

Special Instructions for the Remains of _____.
(Name, last 4)

These instructions are to accompany the remains and are intended for autopsy and/or mortuary service staff processing and preparing the body for burial.

The remains of _____ are slightly contaminated with radioactive material that emits alpha particles and low energy gamma rays. When following these special instructions, the levels of radiation associated with preparing the remains for burial are safe and will not result in a dose to staff members in excess of 5 mrem (1/1000th of the allowed occupational dose limit).

1. Use normal pathogenic protective clothing (e.g., universal precautions) when handling the remains. Additionally, double glove and wear a surgical mask.
2. Use care to remove the deceased clothing so that any dust is not agitated and resuspended into the air. Place the clothing in a plastic bag and seal it. Then double bag the clothing. During embalming and other processing of the remains, be sure to collect all liquid wastes and any solid wastes in autoclave containers and run them through the autoclave process. Likewise, do the same for all runoff associated with washing autopsy tools or related equipment. Mark all bags and containers with a contamination sticker or tag and save them for retrieval by the US Army Rock Island radioactive waste disposal staff/contractors.
3. Take care not to cross contaminate items or surfaces in the laboratory. For example, do not make entries on a computer keyboard without first removing the outer layer of gloves.
4. Double bag the body bags used for transporting the remains to the mortuary facility and mark with a contamination sticker or tag. Likewise, do the same for any gowns, gloves, or other protective clothing used while executing these special instructions.
5. Ensure that no single staff member is in close proximity of the body or collected waste containers for more than a total of 10 hours. Within one meter would be indicative close proximity.
6. Incineration of the remains is not recommended. If incineration is desired, approval from the state health department may be necessary.

While the remains are in DoD custody, radiological specialists from the US Army Radiological Advisory Team at Walter Reed Army Medical Center are available for on site assistance in implementing these instructions. As well, radiological specialists from the Armed Forces Radiobiology Research Institute are also available for assistance.

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