



# India Issues First National Guidelines for Scientific and Dignified Disaster Victim Identification

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## Why the Guidelines Were Needed

India has faced many mass fatality incidents like plane crashes, floods, explosions, and bridge collapses that made victim identification difficult or delayed.

Before this, there was no national procedure to identify victims scientifically and consistently across the country.

The new guidelines were released by the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA), marking the first national Disaster Victim Identification (DVI) framework.

## Objective of the Guidelines

The purpose is to ensure scientific, coordinated, and respectful identification of disaster victims.

They aim for the dignified handover of remains to families and legal and emotional closure for victims' loved ones.

The framework combines forensic science, coordination, and humanitarian sensitivity.

## Key Features of the Guidelines

### Four-Stage Identification Process

#### The process includes:

1. Systematic recovery of human remains from the disaster site.

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2. Post-mortem data collection (fingerprints, DNA, dental, physical markers).
3. Ante-mortem data collection (medical, dental, and personal records from families).
4. Reconciliation of post-mortem and ante-mortem data to confirm identity.

### **Scientific Forensic Methods**

Use of DNA profiling, forensic odontology (dental records), and fingerprints for accurate identification.

Recommendation to create a National Dental Data Registry so dental records can be compared quickly in future disasters.

Inclusion of forensic archaeology to help recover and identify remains even months or years after a disaster.

### **Advanced Tools and Technology**

**Digital biometrics** from **victims' mobile phones** can help identify remains using stored photos or documents.

**Virtual autopsy and forensic anthropology** also form part of the identification process

### **Operational and Humanitarian Approach**

The guidelines detail the **roles of police, health teams, forensic experts, and emergency responders for coordinated action**.

They emphasise **cultural sensitivity, respect for community customs, and emotional support for families during the identification process**.

The approach recognizes **victim identification as both a technical and humanitarian task**.

### **Challenges Addressed by the Guidelines**

Previous problems included inconsistent methods, shortage of trained forensic staff, logistical gaps, and poor coordination.

Natural and man-made disasters can result in fragmented, burned, or displaced remains, complicating identification.

The new framework aims to reduce misidentification, legal delays, and emotional distress for families.

### **Significance of the Initiative**

This SOP marks a major step in institutionalising scientific disaster response in India.

It aligns India's practices with international standards such as those recommended by INTERPOL for Disaster Victim Identification.

The guidelines promote respectful, accurate, and timely identification of disaster victims, helping families receive closure.