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Handbook for Emergency Battlefield Burials and Graves Registration by Troops

See ETO SOP No. 26 dated 9 June '44
"ARMY BURIALS, GRAVES REGISTRATION
AND DISPOSITION OF EFFECTS" for
changes and additions to this handbook.

HQ SOS ETOUSA
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HANDBOOK FOR EMERGENCY BURIALS AND GRAVES REGISTRATION BY TROOPS

INTRODUCTION

Burials in the theater of operations are in general supervised by Graves Registration Companies, which are specifically trained in that function. Labor for digging graves only is provided by Divisional or higher commanders from service troops. Under battle conditions combat troops as well as service troops of necessity will be designated as burial details to operate in the absence of trained graves registration personnel. This pamphlet is designed to serve as a guide in such emergencies. It contains a brief summary of all pertinent Army Regulations, Circulars, Bulletins, etc., setting forth burial procedures. Individual initiative and resourcefulness are required of all persons when called upon to perform this hallowed and essential mission.

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1. **Responsibilities.** Responsibilities of officers in charge of battlefield burials include, but are not limited to the following:
 - a. Identification of each deceased individual. Securing and recording any information which will be helpful in later identifying those who cannot be identified on the spot. (See par. 3.)
 - b. Removal of the remains of deceased battle casualties from the sight of other soldiers.
 - c. Insure that all deceased soldiers are properly buried in established Army cemeteries whenever possible, reducing isolated burials to a minimum. (See par. 4.)
 - d. Collection and disposition of personal effects found on the body of deceased soldiers. (See par. 8.)
 - e. The proper and complete recording of the location of all graves and preparation of the Report of Burial. (See par. 9.)
 - f. Recording and forwarding to nearest graves registration personnel such pertinent details as will enable such personnel to make complete and final record of the burials.

2. **Search of Battlefield.** Careful and organized search of a battle ground must be made with a view to evacuating all deceased personnel to established burial grounds. Remember that defence against enemy fire involves cover and concealment. The job of searching the battlefield is made difficult by this fact. Every effort must be exercised, however, to evacuate the remains of all deceased soldiers.

3. Identification.

a. Identity may be established in many different ways, the following are suggestions but are not all inclusive:

- (1) Identification tags.
- (2) Identification card.
- (3) Name or serial number written on the clothing (waist band of trousers, pockets, collar of shirt, etc.), letters or papers in possession of the deceased. (Laundry marks usually consist of the last four digits of the serial number.)
- (4) Scars, tattoos and other physical marks or peculiarities.

b. If identity cannot be established from other data, fingerprints of all fingers of both hands will be taken. If the condition of the remains is such as to absolutely preclude taking of fingerprints, a tooth chart is to be prepared. This chart should be prepared by medical personnel, if present if not, the chart should be taken by the individual in charge of the burial detail.

