

1600th

# 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  
Office of the Chief Quartermaster  
1 December 1943



# 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.



Complete information as to scars, tattoo marks, etc., also should be recorded.

#### 4. Burial.

a. Remains of deceased soldiers should be buried in established cemeteries designated by administrative or other orders. Isolated graves should not be used unless absolutely necessary. Graves of less than twelve men are considered isolated burials. Graves should be five feet in depth with one foot between graves. Details of digging, marking graves and laying out cemeteries are shown in diagrams on pages 9 and 10.

b. A chaplain of the faith of the deceased should be present and the last rites prescribed by the faith of the deceased should be read. This service will be conducted unless the lives of the burial party are in danger.

c. All personal effects of the deceased, except clothing, will be removed and placed in a personal effects bag on which the name, rank and serial number of the deceased will be clearly written (see par. 8). The body will then be wrapped in a blanket, shelter half, mattress cover or other available equipment and buried.

d. Rigid personal hygiene must be observed in the handling of diseased casualties or the remains of deceased personnel killed by or contaminated with any type of gas. In cases of extreme contamination it may be necessary to perform decontamination before burial is accomplished. A large "G" will be written or marked on the grave stake of such cases.

#### 5. Grave Stakes.

a. Each grave will be individually marked with a "grave stake" approximately 2 inches × 1 inch × 30 inches. These stakes should be at least one foot in the ground. The standard stakes provided for this purpose are drilled with a hole approximately 2 inches from the top, through which a small wire has been inserted. One of the identification tags is to be fastened to the stake with this wire.

b. The name, rank, serial number, and organization will be painted on the grave stake in all cases where there is not an extra identification tag to place on the stake, after one tag has been buried with the remains. (This will include civilians, allied, and enemy dead.) In the case of allied and enemy dead, the name of the army with which the deceased was serving also will be painted on the stake. Where paint is absolutely not available, this information will be written on the grave stake with ink or graphite pencil. Stakes marked in pencil will be placed in the ground at a slight angle so that the side on which the name has been written will be shielded from the elements.

c. Every effort must be made on the part of officers in charge

of battlefield burials to have a supply of these grave stakes on hand. However, if the supply does become exhausted, any wood available in the area may be used. In addition, bayonets and other battlefield salvage may be used as markers to insure that location of graves will not be lost.

d. In cases of unidentified dead, the word "Unidentified", together with the army with which the deceased was serving, if known, will be painted in black letters on the grave stake.

6. Medical Emergency Tag. Forms 52b, 52c and 52d (paper) must be removed from the remains prior to burial. These medical tags should be forwarded to the nearest medical unit.

#### 7. Disposition of Identification Tags.

a. One of the identification tags (metal) will be buried with the remains. The second identification tag will be wired to the grave stake. Each grave will be individually marked. When more than one individual is being buried at the same time, care must be exercised so that the correct identification tag is placed on the right grave.

b. If only one identification tag is found that tag will be buried with the body.

#### 8. Effects.

a. Every precaution must be taken to secure and protect the personal effects of all deceased persons. It is the responsibility of the Officer in Charge of battlefield burials to insure that all personal effects of deceased persons are securely placed in a "Personal Effects Bag" and that the name, rank, and serial number followed by the word "deceased" are clearly marked on the bag. (Towels, handkerchiefs, etc. will serve where bags are not available.)

b. In cases of unidentified dead a complete copy of the report of burial will be made and placed in the effects bag or other container with the effects. The bag will be plainly marked "Unidentified."

c. Government issue property other than clothing necessary for burial will be assembled and turned over to a Salvage Collecting Company or unit supply officer operating in the sector.

d. After making sure that all the bags containing personal effects have been properly marked, they will be forwarded by the officer in charge of the burial party through divisional headquarters to the graves registration unit operating with the division. This applies only to the personal effects found on the remains. Personal effects of the deceased which are found at



rest stations, bivouacs, etc. will be handled by the graves registration unit in accordance with the divisional administrative order. The divisional administrative order should include directions for assembling personal effects bags and their shipment to the Effects QM at the port. The Effects QM only, will arrange for the shipment of the personal effects to the Kansas City Effects QM in the United States for final disposition.

e. The personal effects of civilians operating with the Armed Forces as well as the effects of allied and enemy dead will be handled in the same manner. Bags containing effects of allied or enemy dead will be clearly marked with the name of the Army with which the deceased was serving. (Example: British, French, German, etc.)

## 9. Recording and Reports.

a. QMC Form 1-GRS, Report of Burial, must be prepared in quadruplicate at the time of burial.

b. All blanks must be filled in. If the information is not available or cannot be obtained, so state. The exact geographical location of the place of death will be shown on the report and not the APO or station number. Particular attention must be given to information concerning means of identification when the identification tags are missing, and to the collection and recording of all information which may be helpful in determining identity, including the location where the remains were found.

c. When identification has not been established, or when no identification tags are found, one additional copy of the Report of Burial, listing all available identifying information will be placed in a glass bottle, empty cartridge case or other container and buried with the remains. A notation will be made on the Report of Burial indicating what action was taken.

d. A detailed sketch as to the location of graves, having reference to permanent landmarks, not likely to be completely obliterated by shell fire, heavy artillery or bombs, will be made. Map coordinates, if obtainable, will be shown on the sketch.

e. Reports covering burial of gas casualties will be marked with a large "G".

f. After having been completed and signed by the officer supervising the burial, the Report of Burial will be forwarded to the headquarters of the graves registration company operating in the sector, through the next higher headquarters to which the burial detail is attached. The headquarters of the graves registration company normally will be at or near corps headquarters.

GRAVES REGISTRATION  
FORM NO. 1  
(Revised 1 Sept. 1943)

## REPORT OF BURIAL

TM 10-630 AND AR 30-1815

Last Name		First	Initial	Rank	Serial No.
Unit					
Organization					
Place of Death		Date of Death		Cause of Death	
Time and Date of Burial		Name of Cemetery		Name of Coordinator of Location	
Grave Number	Row Number	Plot Number		Type of Marker	
Disposition of Identification Tags: Buried with body <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Attached to Marker, Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>					
If No Identification Tags How were remains identified?					

What means of identification were buried with the body?

To determine Right or Left use Deceased's Right and Left.

Who is buried on:

Deceased's Right:	Name	Serial No.	Rank	Organization	Grave No.
Deceased's Left:	Name	Serial No.	Rank	Organization	Grave No.

Signature of Name, Rank and if possible Organization of person furnishing above Data when other than officer reporting burial.



If print of identification tag is not affixed fill in below:

Emergency Address	Name
Address	
Religion	

List only Personal Effects Found on Body and disposition of same:

Signature of Officer or other person reporting burial

Verified by G.R.S. Officer

(SEE OVER)



Left	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40	41	42	43	44	45	46	47	48	49	50	51	52	53	54	55	56	57	58	59	60	61	62	63	64	65	66	67	68	69	70	71	72	73	74	75	76	77	78	79	80	81	82	83	84	85	86	87	88	89	90	91	92	93	94	95	96	97	98	99	100	101	102	103	104	105	106	107	108	109	110	111	112	113	114	115	116	117	118	119	120	121	122	123	124	125	126	127	128	129	130	131	132	133	134	135	136	137	138	139	140	141	142	143	144	145	146	147	148	149	150	151	152	153	154	155	156	157	158	159	160	161	162	163	164	165	166	167	168	169	170	171	172	173	174	175	176	177	178	179	180	181	182	183	184	185	186	187	188	189	190	191	192	193	194	195	196	197	198	199	200	201	202	203	204	205	206	207	208	209	210	211	212	213	214	215	216	217	218	219	220	221	222	223	224	225	226	227	228	229	230	231	232	233	234	235	236	237	238	239	240	241	242	243	244	245	246	247	248	249	250	251	252	253	254	255	256	257	258	259	260	261	262	263	264	265	266	267	268	269	270	271	272	273	274	275	276	277	278	279	280	281	282	283	284	285	286	287	288	289	290	291	292	293	294	295	296	297	298	299	300	301	302	303	304	305	306	307	308	309	310	311	312	313	314	315	316	317	318	319	320	321	322	323	324	325	326	327	328	329	330	331	332	333	334	335	336	337	338	339	340	341	342	343	344	345	346	347	348	349	350	351	352	353	354	355	356	357	358	359	360	361	362	363	364	365	366	367	368	369	370	371	372	373	374	375	376	377	378	379	380	381	382	383	384	385	386	387	388	389	390	391	392	393	394	395	396	397	398	399	400	401	402	403	404	405	406	407	408	409	410	411	412	413	414	415	416	417	418	419	420	421	422	423	424	425	426	427	428	429	430	431	432	433	434	435	436	437	438	439	440	441	442	443	444	445	446	447	448	449	450	451	452	453	454	455	456	457	458	459	460	461	462	463	464	465	466	467	468	469	470	471	472	473	474	475	476	477	478	479	480	481	482	483	484	485	486	487	488	489	490	491	492	493	494	495	496	497	498	499	500	501	502	503	504	505	506	507	508	509	510	511	512	513	514	515	516	517	518	519	520	521	522	523	524	525	526	527	528	529	530	531	532	533	534	535	536	537	538	539	540	541	542	543	544	545	546	547	548	549	550	551	552	553	554	555	556	557	558	559	560	561	562	563	564	565	566	567	568	569	570	571	572	573	574	575	576	577	578	579	580	581	582	583	584	585	586	587	588	589	590	591	592	593	594	595	596	597	598	599	600	601	602	603	604	605	606	607	608	609	610	611	612	613	614	615	616	617	618	619	620	621	622	623	624	625	626	627	628	629	630	631	632	633	634	635	636	637	638	639	640	641	642	643	644	645	646	647	648	649	650	651	652	653	654	655	656	657	658	659	660	661	662	663	664	665	666	667	668	669	670	671	672	673	674	675	676	677	678	679	680	681	682	683	684	685	686	687	688	689	690	691	692	693	694	695	696	697	698	699	700	701	702	703	704	705	706	707	708	709	710	711	712	713	714	715	716	717	718	719	720	721	722	723	724	725	726	727	728	729	730	731	732	733	734	735	736	737	738	739	740	741	742	743	744	745	746	747	748	749	750	751	752	753	754	755	756	757	758	759	760	761	762	763	764	765	766	767	768	769	770	771	772	773	774	775	776	777	778	779	780	781	782	783	784	785	786	787	788	789	790	791	792	793	794	795	796	797	798	799	800	801	802	803	804	805	806	807	808	809	810	811	812	813	814	815	816	817	818	819	820	821	822	823	824	825	826	827	828	829	830	831	832	833	834	835	836	837	838	839	840	841	842	843	844	845	846	847	848	849	850	851	852	853	854	855	856	857	858	859	860	861	862	863	864	865	866	867	868	869	870	871	872	873	874	875	876	877	878	879	880	881	882	883	884	885	886	887	888	889	890	891	892	893	894	895	896	897	898	899	900	901	902	903	904	905	906	907	908	909	910	911	912	913	914	915	916	917	918	919	920	921	922	923	924	925	926	927	928	929	930	931	932	933	934	935	936	937	938	939	940	941	942	943	944	945	946	947	948	949	950	951	952	953	954	955	956	957	958	959	960	961	962	963	964	965	966	967	968	969	970	971	972	973	974	975	976	977	978	979	980	981	982	983	984	985	986	987	988	989	990	991	992	993	994	995	996	997	998	999	1000
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# **IF DECEASED UNIDENTIFIED**

Take Fingerprints of Both Hands. If unable to obtain a complete set of Fingerprints, Take Those You Can, and fill in the following:

Height: Laundry Marks:  
 Weight: Number of Rifle:  
 Color of Eyes: Wear Glasses?  
 Color of Hair: Is Tooth Chart Attached?  
 Race:

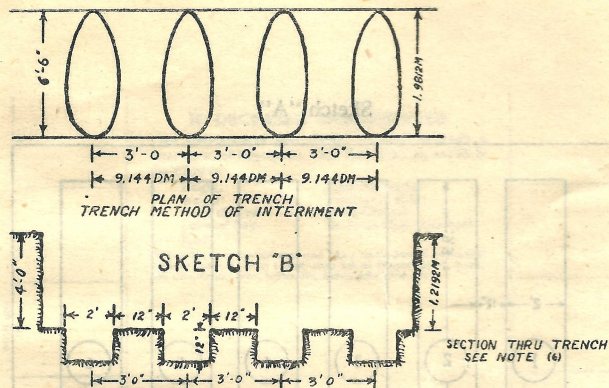
(If possible, have medical personnel take a tooth chart, if no medical personnel present, fill in a tooth chart below) in space below, locate, and describe any scars, birthmarks, moles, deformities, etc.

Note below any identifying clues found, such as letters, photographs, probable organization of deceased, etc.:

## **TOOTH CHART**

||
||
||





### NOTES

- (1) Graves to be a minimum of 5 feet in depth.
- (2) All interments to be made with head in same direction.
- (3) Marker to be placed at head of grave.
- (4) Graves to be numbered consecutively, starting with No. 1 at left (standing at foot of grave and facing head) and following row to end, then continuing with the first grave at left of second row.
- (5) Where terrain or other reasons necessitate excavation of trench for burial purposes, the remains will be interred therein in same manner and distance apart as per this plan (see Sketch "A") in such cases extreme care must be taken to insure marker being placed at the grave to which it pertains.
- (6) In light or sandy soil where excavation will not stand, it is sometimes necessary to dig trenches to a depth of 4 feet and then make single excavations 1 foot deeper (see Sketch "B").
- (7) Care should be taken so that graves are in line with one another both laterally and longitudinally.
- (8) The meridian (directional arrow) indicating north should be shown on all plans and sketches.
- (9) Separate layout plans should be prepared for each cemetery and/or burial plot.

**10. Allied or Enemy Dead.** Burial procedure for allied or enemy dead will be the same as that prescribed for the forces of the United States Army, except that one half of the identification tag or disc will be forwarded to the nearest graves registration company headquarters. In the case of British dead, the *GREEN* tag will be buried with the remains and the *RED* tag will be forwarded as directed above. *One additional copy of the Report of Burial also will be made.* Allied soldiers will be buried in the same plots, alongside American soldiers; enemy dead will be buried in separate plots reserved for that purpose.

**11. Supplies.** All supplies necessary to carry out this mission should be obtained from the Division Quartermaster. Officers in charge of burial details should insure that a sufficient supply of the following items is secured:

QMC Form 1-GRS, Report of Burial. (Form is submitted in quadruplicate.)

Grave Stakes, durable wood.

Bags, Personal Effects.

Pins, Laundry 4 inch (blanket).

Paint brushes.

Paint, white.

Paint, black.

Bottles (for unidentified cases only).

Graphite pencils.

Ink pads for fingerprints.

1 Addressograph Imprint Machine for printing identity tag on Report of Burial. One per platoon.

This list is suggestive and not intended to be all inclusive. Quantities will have to be determined from the tactical situation at hand giving attention to the intensity of the engagement and the strength in the sector.

**12. References.** Following are the references for the above:

TM 10-630

AR 30-1805, 1 Feb. 1924.

AR 30-1810, 1 Feb. 1924.

AR 30-1815, 15 Apr. 1943.

AR 30-1820 including  
change 4, 13 Apr. 1943.

AR 30-1840, 6 Oct. 1941

AR 600-550, 14 May 1943.

Par 479 to 485, FM 100-10.

Sec. IV, WD Cir. 79, 1943.

Sec. V, WD Cir. 173, 27 Jul.  
1943.