

FORENSIC EXPERIENCE IN AIRPLANE CRASH MANAGEMENT

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ABSTRACT

Airplane crash management is a multidisciplinary task. This presentation is focused on the experience of the staff of the Department of Forensic Medicine of Dubai Police General Headquarters in dealing with victims of two isolated accidents. The first took place in 1998 where 59 victims died and only one individual survived the crash. The second occurred in 2001, when forty-three (43) of the forty-six (46) people on board the passenger plane met their death in the accident. Most victims had been extensively burned and/or injured beyond facial recognition.

The joint efforts of all departments of Dubai Police contributed to recovering and transporting the victims from the sites to Dubai, using refrigerated vehicle. The site of the crash in both occasions had incidentally been in Sharjah. The staff of the Forensic Medicine Department undertook the task of receiving and labeling victims, photographing, fingerprinting and examination.

Identification achieved through different methods, ranging from personal documents and properties, facial features, evidence of previous surgery and DNA profiles. The cause of death of each victim was determined.

The pilots and co-pilots were identified and carefully examined. Autopsy proved that neither had any natural disease that could have contributed to causing the accident. Moreover, they had not been consuming alcohol or drugs, nor had been intoxicated by carbon monoxide.

The tasks of postmortem examination, documentation, identification and release of bodies to the relatives or respective agencies had been completed within a time frame ranging from one day to one week.

Key words: Air crash disaster management, Identification, Injuries of victims of airplane crash.

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