

**Handbook for  
Emergency Battlefield Burials  
and  
Graves Registration  
by Troops**

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

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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.

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  $\times$  1 inch  $\times$  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 52*b*, 52*c* and 52*d* (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.

# REPORT OF BURIAL

FORM 10-430 AND AR 30-1813

Date

Last Name	First	Initial	Rank	Serial No.
Unit		Organization		
Place of Death		Line of Death	Cause of Death	
Time and Date of Burial		Name of Cemetery	Name of Christian or Location	
Cross Number	Row Number	File Number	Type of Marker	

Disposition of Identification Tag: Buried with body Yes  No  Attached to Marker Yes  No

If No Identification Tag  
(Has your remains identified?)

What means of identification were buried with the body?

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

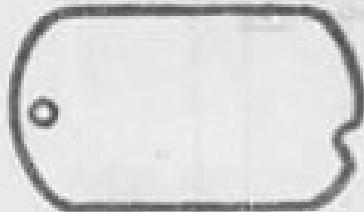
Who is buried on:

Deceased's Right: Name Serial No. Rank Organization Cross No.

Deceased's Left: Name Serial No. Rank Organization Cross No.

Signature or 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

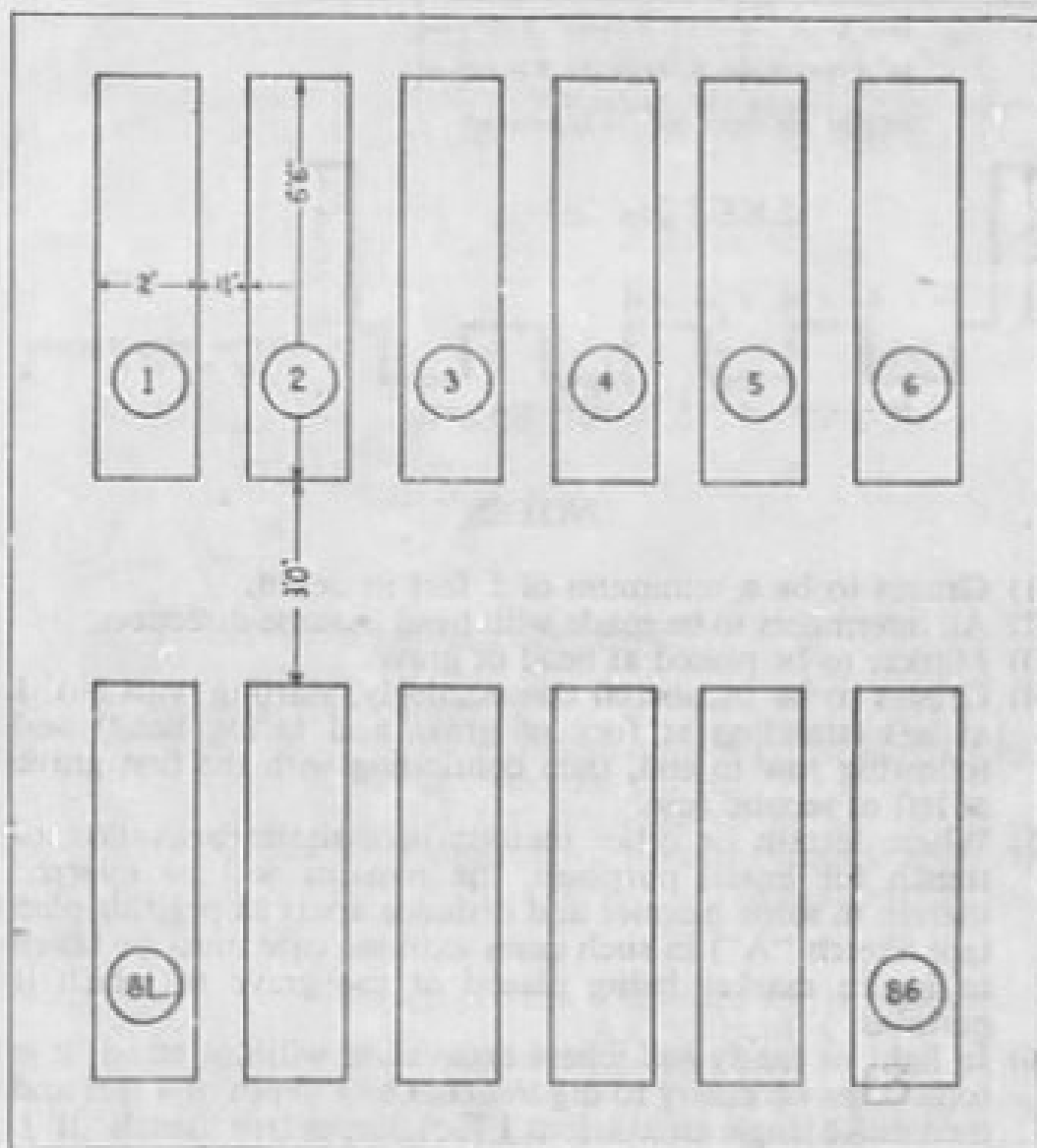
Verified by C.R.S. Officer

(SEE OVER)

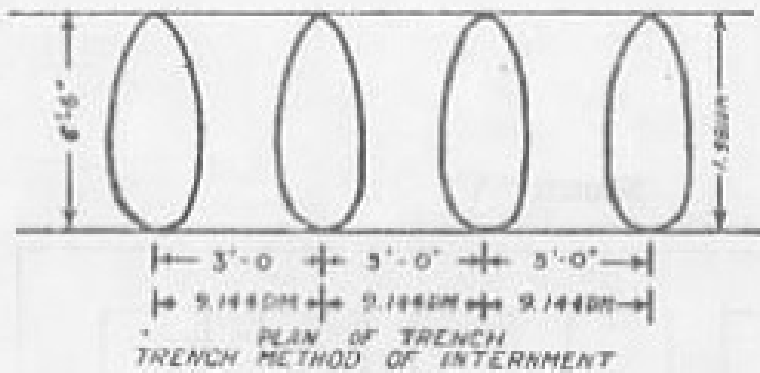




Sketch "A"



Grave is 2 ft. wide, 6 ft. 6 in. long, allow 12 in. between graves (right to left).



### 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.