

Myths and Realities in the Management of Dead Bodies

Myth: Disasters cause deaths at random.

Reality: Disasters tend to take a higher toll on the most vulnerable geographic areas (high-risk areas), generally those settled by the poorest people.

M: The fastest way to dispose of bodies and avoid the spread of disease is through mass burials or cremations. This can help create a sense of relief among survivors.

R: Survivors will feel more at peace and manage their sense of loss better if they are allowed to follow their beliefs and religious practices and if they are able to identify and recover the remains of their loved ones.

M: Following disasters, dead bodies pose the risk of epidemics.

R: Dead bodies do not cause epidemics in the aftermath of disasters.

M: It is best to limit information on the magnitude of the tragedy.

R: Restricting access to information creates a lack of confidence in the population, which can lead to misconduct and even violence.

M: It is impossible to identify a large number of bodies after a tragedy.

R: Conditions always exist that allow for the identification of bodies or body parts.

M: DNA techniques for identifying bodies is not available in most countries due to its high cost and technological requirements.

R: This technology is rapidly becoming accessible to all countries. Furthermore, in the case of major disasters, most countries can count on external financial and technological support including DNA technology.