

IAFR UKFRRT Training Weekend

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During the 19th and 20th of March, the Cranfield Forensic Institute hosted a training weekend for the UK Forensic Radiography Response Team of the International Association of Forensic Radiographers. The event that was funded by the Home Office and the Association of Chief Police Officers took place on the campus of the Defence Academy of the United Kingdom at Shrivenham.



After a day of lectures and discussions on Saturday, the group of 58 delegates, supervisors and lecturers made best use of the on-campus Officers' Mess dining and bar facilities by spending the evening exchanging ideas and experiences.

On Sunday, the delegates were able to implement and test their theoretical knowledge at five different workstations, set up by an experienced team of supervisors.



The first station was dental radiography. This type of radiographic imaging is absolutely crucial in cases of mass fatality incidents, such as natural disasters, transport accidents or terrorist attacks. Dental radiographs of the victims of a mass fatality can be compared to radiographs taken during consultations with dentists of people who have been reported missing after an incident. This very reliable method is much faster than DNA comparisons and is therefore superior for identification purposes.

Dental radiographs can also reveal important information about the age of a victim, as long as they are under 20-25 years old. The development of juvenile and later adult dentition is a very good indicator for the age of a person.

At the second station, the delegates had another opportunity to use the actual equipment that the Home Office has sourced for any mass fatality incident in the UK. This mobile, direct digital x-ray unit has been specifically developed and adapted for the needs of forensic radiographers in the event of a mass fatality. X-Ograph, the company that supplied and also maintains the Home Office equipment has worked very closely with the IAFR on optimising the equipment.



Image processing was the subject of the third station. The Home Office Mass Fatality System has an integrated PACS (Picture Archive and Communication System) which permits all images from each case to be centrally stored for viewing by radiologists, pathologists, dentists and other forensic professionals. Digital images can be remotely accessed or transmitted electronically to allow identifications to be made. This will be particularly important in international incidents.

The last of the purely practical stations was the use of the x-ray image intensifier or sometimes referred to as fluoroscope. This device allows radiographs to observe continuous x-ray images, much like a video compared to a still photograph. Fluoroscopes

are used to investigate victims immediately after entry into a mortuary even before a body bag is being opened. This process is designed to improve the health and safety of all personnel in a mortuary by detecting and locating any items that could potentially be harmful.





At the final station, the delegates were presented with a series of x-ray images showing various objects and body parts that they may come across during a real-life incident. Such familiarisation process is very important because during a mass fatality incident, radiographers are confronted with very different types of images

compared to their every day work in hospitals.

The day was wrapped up with a debrief session, summarising all the stations and processes and methods and how they would all combine with each other during a deployment. Such training weekends is ensuring that the UK has a sufficient contingency of forensic radiographers to be ready for any mass fatality in this country or in any other part of world where the identification of victims of a mass fatality is needed.



Our final thanks goes to the Defence Academy of the United Kingdom, who provided the fantastic venue and supported the event in any way imaginable and Xograph, who assisted with the the equipment and technical support throughout the planning and delivery of the weekend.

