



COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES

DEPARTMENT OF MEDICAL EXAMINER-CORONER

1104 N. MISSION RD, LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA 90033



Jonathan R. Lucas, M.D.
Chief Medical Examiner-Coroner

Aug. 31, 2018

STATEMENT BY DEPARTMENT OF MEDICAL EXAMINER-CORONER ON MISIDENTIFICATION OF BODY

The Los Angeles County Department of Medical Examiner-Coroner (DMEC) has determined it incorrectly identified a body that was found burned beyond recognition in a remote area of Lancaster.

We would like to publicly apologize to the family of the man who was misidentified as the decedent, and also express our regrets to the community we serve.

Identification is one of the department's most important functions, and it is a responsibility we take very seriously. In this instance, we made an error based on the information that we had at the time, but no longer believe to be correct.

As forensic tools and strategies continue to be developed, we are reevaluating our processes in identification to help keep incidents like this from happening again in the future. These types of mistakes are unacceptable to us and run counter to our mission of looking after and protecting the decedents of Los Angeles County. We are committed to making improvements wherever they are warranted.

Here is the sequence of events surrounding this misidentification:

On July 2, Los Angeles County Sheriff's deputies alerted our department of a body found in Lancaster. Due to the extreme thermal damage of the body and no evidence of identification near or on the decedent, the body was brought to our office and listed as an Undetermined Doe.

Less than a week later, and after further analysis, we verified the decedent was a male, and he was classified as John Doe #176. DMEC staff was unable to capture fingerprints or bone DNA due to the extensive damage of the body.

On July 26, LASD contacted our investigators and indicated that John Doe #176 could possibly be a missing person by the name of Adam Buckley. Less than three weeks later, our board-certified radiologist compared body X-rays known to be of Mr. Buckley with body X-rays of the decedent and, based on the information known at that time, confirmed the identification for LASD.

Immediately after the identification, our office notified Mr. Buckley's legal next of kin of the match and John Doe #176 was identified as Adam Buckley.

Accreditations:

National Association of Medical Examiners (Provisional)
California Medical Association-Continuing Medical Education
Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education

ANAB ISO/IEC 17025:2005 Forensic Science Testing Laboratories
Peace Officer Standards and Training Certified

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On Aug. 28, two weeks after the identification, our department was contacted by another agency, which informed us that Mr. Buckley had been located and was alive.

We confirmed this identification and established Mr. Buckley was in fact alive and a misidentification had been made. Immediately after learning this, we called the decedent's next of kin and notified them that their loved one was still alive and apologized for our mistake.

Additional tests are being run on John Doe #176, including DNA found in a muscle. Our department is still waiting on those results. At this time, we have no leads on who he may be.

Media Contact:

Sarah Ardalani

Public Information Officer

(323) 343-0734

sardalani@coroner.lacounty.gov