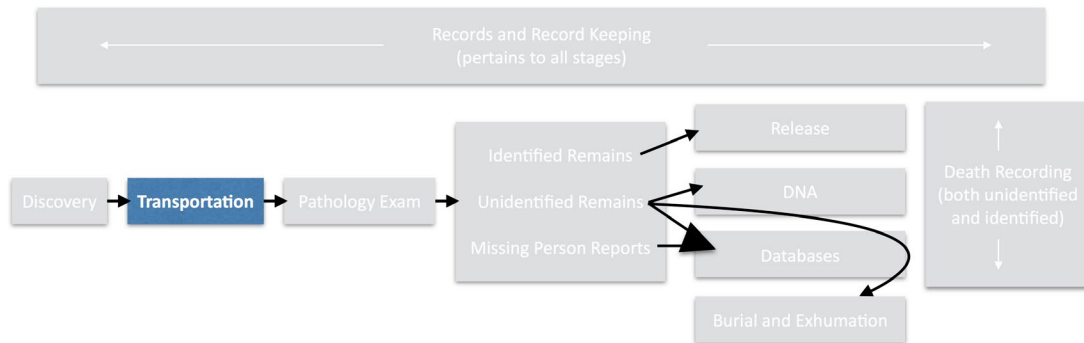


## Section 3: Transportation



### INTRODUCTION

Transportation of the remains of suspected UBCs in the U.S.- Mexico border region provides unique challenges to law enforcement officials, members of the Border Patrol, and medico-legal personnel, often due to the remote regions where the remains are often discovered. These areas are not easily traversed and in some cases may not be accessible by roads. Oftentimes, law enforcement personnel must use off-road equipment such as ATV's (All Terrain Vehicles) or motor vehicles with four-wheel drive capacity. In most cases these vehicles are not capable of properly transporting remains in a way that is both respectful and conducive to their preservation.

Transportation should never be delayed, due to the rapid degradation of remains that have been exposed to heat and/or elements. Body decay affects the ability of medicolegal officials to determine the identity of an individual.

### ISSUES

#### Refrigeration and Storage

Interviews along the border region indicate that refrigerated vehicles are often available only through the private contracting of mortuaries, funeral homes, and other establishments that might have access to such vehicles.

#### Lack of government services may provoke unseemly contractual agreements for transportation.

Based on evidence gathered in the study, it appears that due to a monopoly on body transport vehicles in an area, mortuaries are able to charge exorbitant prices to the county for transportation services.

## BEST PRACTICES

**Transfer all bodies from the death site to a covered, refrigerated vehicle or storage unit as soon as possible.**

1. Bodies should remain covered during transport, both out of respect for the deceased and to ensure bystanders are not subjected to viewing decomposed remains [17].
2. Delay should be avoided in body recovery to reduce the loss of important identifying evidence to rapid decomposition of remains [19].
3. Refrigeration is a key element in the transportation of remains from harsh crossing regions to medical facilities, and should be used whenever available.
4. Civilians, hikers, hunters and all non-law enforcement, non-medico-legal personnel should never be permitted to transport or deliver discovered remains.

### Pouch (née body) bags

1. Pouch bags (known vernacularly as body bags) should always be used, to prevent the loss of important, identifying evidence.
2. Pouch bags should be used when transporting remains. If pouch bags are not available the remains should be wrapped in cloth and contained as much as possible [20][17].

### Body parts

Individual body parts, such as limbs, should be treated as individual bodies if recovered without other associations [20].

### Personal belongings

Personal belongings should be transported alongside remains, to aid in identification [17].

### Contracts with private entities

1. Fiscal transparency should be a part of all contractual agreements for transportation.
2. However, for both 1) maintaining control of a body and 2) long term savings, counties should own vehicles for body transportation.