

FORENSIC GEOLOGY AND GEOETHICS



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IUGS INITIATIVE ON FORENSIC GEOLOGY (IFG)

IUGS-IFG[#] was set up in 2011 to promote and develop the applications of geology (e.g. soil textural analysis, alkane analysis) to policing and law enforcement throughout the world.

This includes assisting with searches to locate graves or items of interest that have been buried beneath the ground surface as part of a criminal act, and with the analysis of geological trace evidence found on items connected to a crime.

It also includes the provision of trace evidence analysis and presentation of evidence in court.

Forensic geologists may also assist law enforcement in other ways including; homicide, sexual assaults, counter terrorism, kidnapping, humanitarian incidents, environmental crimes, precious minerals theft, fakes and fraudulent crimes.



GEOETHICS

If the forensic geoscientist has the relevant technical and scientific training, expertise and contacts, such as through the IUGS IFG, the analysis can be the most straightforward part of the work we do. The associated geoethical issues can be the most challenging and complex to manage. Forensic geologists are required to carry out their research or case work with integrity, honesty and in a manner that is law-abiding, professional, socially acceptable and highly responsible.

As the science of forensic geology begins to advance around the world it is desirable to establish a standard set of principles and values and to provide an agreed, ethical framework.

Many of our cases involve both living and deceased humans, all assessments are conducted with extreme respect and dignity.



CORE VALUES AND CODE OF CONDUCT

Establishing standards, guidelines and protocols in forensic geology is central to our mission.

Our principles include: Integrity, accountability, honesty, professional fairness, courtesy, trustworthiness, data-sharing and information transparency, education and training, multi-disciplinary collaboration, development of research, fair debate, evaluating uncertainty and risk, regulation and accreditation, effective communication and diplomacy, presenting evidence in courts of law and elimination of potential bias.



The uptake of Forensic Geoscience brings with it considerable challenges arising from the direct and often very sensitive human interactions. By developing this ethical component to the work that IUGS-IFG undertakes, combines scientific and technical approaches with sensitive solutions, and also, in parallel, helps define an ethical framework for forensic geoscientists' research and practice in addressing these challenges.



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