

NCIS Coding Tips

January 2006

NCIS Coder Manual

Version 2.5 of the Coding Manual and User Guide has recently been released. The manual now includes 50 case examples that hopefully will provide guidance on how to code mechanisms and objects for the bulk of external cause deaths.

Copies of the coding manual will be distributed to all coders over the coming months. Version 2.5 renders all previous versions of the manual obsolete.

All future mass releases of the coding manual will be in a format that allows for the easy replacement of single or multiple pages, e.g. A folder with appropriate dividers and loose pages instead of the current bound manual.

NCIS Coder Training

Training has now been completed for a large number of coders within each state.

Further coder training sessions may be held for Coronial Offices or jurisdictions when reasonably required.

Anyone who would like to organise a session or obtain further copies of the NCIS Coder User Manual should contact Leanne Daking as soon as possible via either:

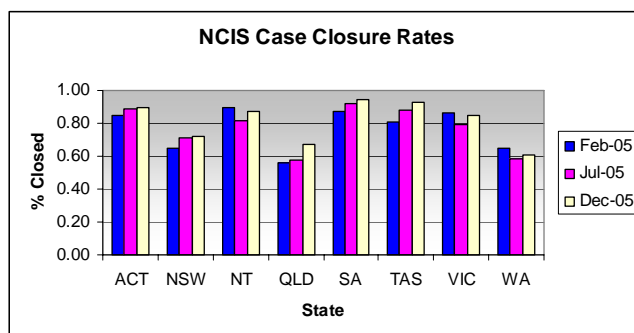
- 03 9684 4458 OR
- leanned@vifm.org

Case Statistics

As we progress into 2006 you may like to see the results of the work you did in 2005.

Case Closure Rate for 2005

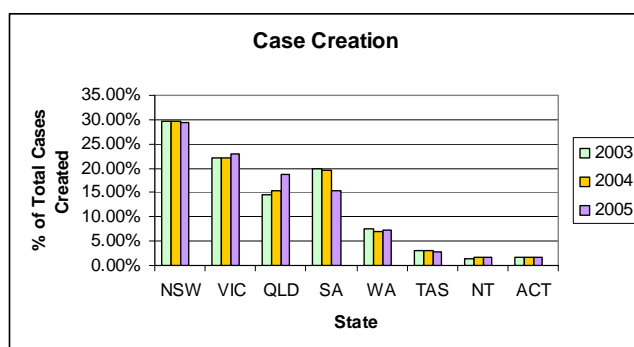
As the graph below illustrates the case closure rate steadily increased in the majority of jurisdictions throughout the year.



Jurisdictions where there appears to have been a decrease in case closure rates are known to have experienced workload increases or technological setbacks throughout the year, that explain these results.

Case Creation Rate

The graph below illustrates the percentage (%) of cases that each jurisdiction has created in the NCIS for 2003, 2004 and 2005.



Coding Reminders

Coders are reminded of the following coding principles:

Case Type & Intent

1. If Case Type – Death Due to Natural Cause(s)
→ Intent – remains blank

Principle:

A natural death does not involve the formation of intent and thus no intent should be coded.

The majority of natural deaths are related to the natural or uncontrollable breakdown of the human body and therefore cannot be influenced by the intent of the deceased or any other person

2. If Case Type – Death Due to External Cause(s)
→ Intent – **MANDATORY**, code as appropriate

3. If Case Type – Still Enquiring
→ Intent – **MANDATORY**, code as appropriate

(This is applicable for Case Type and Intent on Notification only)

4. If Case Type – Unlikely to be Known
→ Intent – **MANDATORY**, code as appropriate

(This coding often involves a Mechanism of Injury of “Unlikely to be known”)

“Other Specified” Data Fields

When selecting the “Other Specified” code for any data item please ensure that the free text field that is displayed as the third level is completed.

For example: Location is a motel:

- Incident – Location id coded as:
 - Trade or Service Area
 - Other Specified Trade or Service Area
 - Motel

“Coroner Closed” date

The following tip is currently only applicable to QLD, SA, WA, TAS, NT and ACT.

All coders in states using the MUNCCI Local Case Management System should be aware that the concept of the Closed When data field was amended in May last year.

When closing a case you are asked to enter the date that the case was closed. Please enter the date that the case was **closed by the coroner**. That is: the date on the Finding, Dispensed with document or any other document that states that the case has been dealt with and the matter is settled/finalised.

Amendments will be made to the wording on the information text box displayed on MUNCCI as well as to the NCIS interface (for NSW and VIC data entry) in March 2006.

The following is reprinted as a reminder:

- **Closed When Date**

Changes to this data field have been twofold

1. Data field renamed as **Coroner Closed**

All states, excluding VIC and NSW are asked to commence using this field to enter the date the case was closed by the coroner.

Victoria and New South Wales will be advised when the changes to NCIS have been implemented and modifications to data entry practice commence.

Amendments to this field will:

- Ensure that all states are using the field for the same concept and data;
 - Allow states to determine the duration between notification and closure of cases by coroners.
2. Inclusion of an automated and hidden Date Case Closed field.

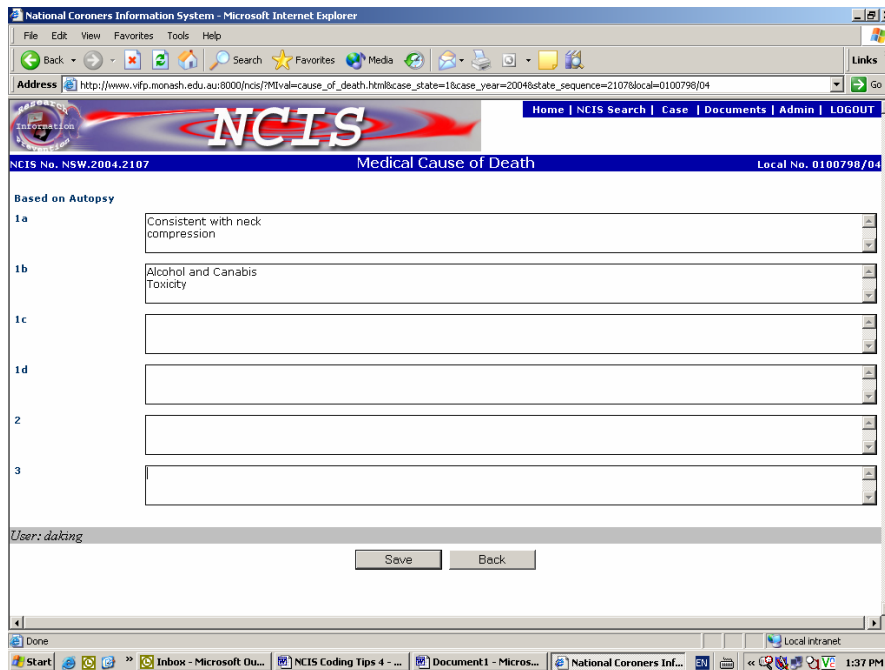
An automated field has been added to MUNCCI to date stamp each case upon closure. The field is hidden from coders.

The inclusion of this field will:

- Give the NCIS quality team a reliable indication of the date a case was closed for inclusion in QA processes.
- Allow states to determine the duration between notification and closure in the LCMS or NCIS.

Coding Tip - Cleaning Up Data Fields

Did you ever wonder why some free text fields look odd or take up too much room on the screen?



What causes the formatting anomaly?

Gaps in the data are caused by blank characters being saved in the text field. Usually this is a consequence of copying or cutting areas of text from other documents and pasting them into the NCIS data fields.

So, why is it a problem?

Besides the visual or aesthetic appeal of making the data fields “pretty” there is a legitimate reason for ensuring that all free text is clear of blank characters or spaces.

The added spaces and returns (pressing enter) in the text result in distorted data when searches are loaded into certain file types, such as an Excel spreadsheet. Excel recognises returns and in some cases spaces as a need to move the data to the next cell. This results in the splitting of data that belong in the same data field. This results in creation of additional cells in the spreadsheet which can be very confusing and make analysis of the data very difficult.

How can I remove the spaces?

Clearance of the spaces from the end of a statement in a data field is simple:

1. Place cursor in applicable data field, ensuring that the cursor is at the end of the statement, so in the above example after the ‘n’ in compression

Consistent with neck
compression

2. Press [SHIFT] and [END], this will highlight all characters until the end of the data field

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compression

3. Press [DELETE], this will remove all highlight characters

4. The statement in the data field should now be displayed as one complete sentences

Consistent with neck compression

5. It may be necessary to repeat the process several times until all the spaces have been removed from the data field.

Product Related

The following is an excerpt from the Coding Manual and User Guide, Version 2.5. It is anticipated that the advice contained in the table will assist in removing some of the confusion of what denotes a Product Related death.

Basic Definitions

For the purpose of NCIS the following definitions apply:

Product	<p>Any object created with the intention that it will be used by or is likely to be used by consumers (e.g. motor vehicle, toys, food and kitchen utensil).</p> <p>Excludes the:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• purchase of a service, such as a travel by a train;• natural facilities, such as cliffs, ocean, rivers, trees, the ground etc;• man made equivalents of natural facilities, such as floor, dams; and• large structures (rarely solely owned by one person), such as, buildings, bridges
Consumer	<p>Any person who purchases merchandise without the intention or either reselling them or using them in the manufacture, servicing or treatment of other products.</p>

Background

Consumer products and/or their use can result in property damage, injury or death. This applies to the immediate impact of the product usage, but also encompasses circumstances where there may be a delayed onset of the effects of using the product.

Overall, Australia's levels of consumer product safety are considered to be at a reasonable level. It is acknowledged that product safety is often dependent not only on the design, manufacturer and instruction but also on the way the product is used by the consumer and that product misuse and inadequate maintenance/servicing are likely to be the more significant causes of product-related injury and death.

As a result, some of the focus has shifted from identifying and preventing product faults and defects to other factors which may potentially contribute to product-related incidents. These factors may include:

- State or condition of product at the time of the incident;
- Behaviour or actions of the person using the product or other persons nearby:
 - Careless use
 - Used for purpose not intended by manufacturer
 - Inadequate skill
 - Perceptual or cognitive factors (failure to understand risks)
 - Product not services/maintained
 - Intentional / self-harm
- Activity the product was being used for;
- Environment or location in which the product was being used

A recent revolution in the domain of product safety has resulted in the expansion of the definitions to include misuse of the product that can be reasonably anticipated or is foreseeable, recognising harm can potentially result from the way in which products are used, even when this use was not that intended by the manufacturer.

Logically, consumers pay careful attention to the use of products which are intrinsically dangerous, such as power tools, motor vehicles, heating appliances. Consumers understand that heaters can result in house fires and motor vehicle accidents often result major trauma.

However, less consideration is given to those products that are not intrinsically hazardous or are seemingly safe, such as clothing, children’s toys or household furniture.

Many products used everyday generate considerable risk when consumers become complacent, the product is used in a careless or incorrect manner (such as knives, drugs, motor vehicles, ladders and diseases can be caused or exacerbated by everyday activities such as smoking or drinking).

Note:

Sources of the information, comments and opinions in the above include:

Productivity Commission 2005, *Review of the Australian Consumer Product Safety System*, Discussion Draft July.

Guide For Use

Only one of the possible three mechanisms/objects contributing to the death needs to be Product Related to indicate that the entire case is a product related death, e.g. if deceased was intoxicated then the case is coded as product related based on the contribution of alcohol to the death.

The following table details some common Objects/Substances and provides guidance on how these should be coded.

Advice given in the table is generic and suits the majority of scenarios. There will however, be cases where the advice below requires further consideration and these issues will be dealt with on a case by case basis.

Note: the examples detailed below are not an exhaustive list but are intended as a sample of some of the most common scenarios.

Object/Substance	Product related
Aircraft (planes, balloons, gliders)	Yes
Alcohol	Yes
Bathtub, Spa, Shower	Yes
Beach, Seashore, Sea and Rocks	No
Bed / Cot	Yes
Bedding	Yes
Bitumen / Asphalt (road)	No
Bridge	No
Building	No
Caravan	Yes
Chain, Wire	Yes
Cigarettes, Tobacco, Tobacco Products (cigars etc)	Yes
Cliff	No
Clothing, Footwear	Yes
Club	Yes
Cold Water / Hot Water	No

Dam, Lake, Water Reservoir	No
Door	Yes
Drugs	Yes
Electrical Transmission Lines	Yes
Fence, Gate	Yes
Fire (Controlled or Uncontrolled)	No
Fire (Flammable Material or Ignition of Clothing)	Yes
Food, Drink	Yes
Furniture	Yes
Gastric Contents	No
Ground	No
Gun	Yes
Gutter, Drains, Kerbs	No
Household Appliances	Yes
Knife (Utensil or Weapon)	Yes
Motor Vehicle (cars, motorcycles, light trucks, heavy transport, bus)	Yes
Nail, Screw	Yes
Paint, Paint thinner, Paint Stripper	Yes
Pedal Cycle, Bicycle	Yes
Person (by self - using no additional object such as stick)	No
Plants (trees, branches etc)	No
Playground Equipment	Yes
Pressurised Type, Hose, Pipe	Yes
Ramp, Escalator	Yes
River, Stream, Creek	No
Rug, Mat, Carpet	Yes
Soap, Detergent, Cleaning Products	Yes
Special Purpose Vehicles, Mobile Machinery (4WD, All-Terrain)	Yes
Sporting Equipment	Yes
Stairs, Steps (Fixed)	No
String, Rope, twine	Yes
Swimming Pool	Yes
Sword, Dagger, Machete	Yes
Tent	Yes
Toilet	Yes
Tools	Yes
Tractor	Yes
Train / Railway Vehicle	No
Tram/Streetcar	Yes
Utensil or Container	Yes
Watercrafts (boats)	Yes
Weather, Natural Disasters	No
Wheelchair	Yes