



Elias J. Kontanis, PhD
Chief
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Elias J. Kontanis joined the NTSB Transportation Disaster Assistance Division in 2008 as the Coordinator for Victim Recovery and Identification. In this capacity he was responsible for facilitating the victim recovery and identification process following transportation mass fatality incidents. Elias currently serves as the Chief of the Transportation Disaster Assistance Division; and is responsible for leading a highly dedicated team of specialists that manage the Board's family assistance program.

Prior to joining the NTSB, Elias served as a forensic anthropologist with the Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command – Central Identification Laboratory (JPAC-CIL). During his tenure at the JPAC-CIL, Elias worked with the Armed Forces DNA Identification Laboratory, FBI, Naval Criminal Investigative Service, and the DOJ International Criminal Investigation Training Assistance Program.

Elias served as a member of the DHHS Disaster Mortuary Operational Response Team, where he participated in the victim identification efforts following the crash of EgyptAir flight 990 and the September 11, 2001, attacks on the World Trade Center. From 2010-2013, he served as Chair of the Scientific Working Group on Disaster Victim Identification.

Elias earned a PhD in biology from Cornell University in 2005 and is a Registered Medicolegal Death Investigator. Elias is an active Gold Seal CFI/CFII/MEI/AGI/IGI, Part 141 Check Instructor, Civil Air Patrol Check Airman, with approximately 2,000 hours of dual instruction given. He serves as an FAA Safety Team Representative and was recognized by AOPA as a Distinguished Flight Instructor in 2014, 2019, and 2021.