

If the Ground Gives Someone Back

The discovery protocol · one page · copy freely · glovebox, job box, kitchen drawer

1 STOP.

All digging and disturbance stops — at the find and anywhere nearby that might hold more. The law requires it (Health & Safety Code §7050.5).

2 Leave everything as it lies.

Do not touch, move, collect, or clean anything. No photographs beyond what safety demands.

3 Call the county sheriff / coroner.

That is the legal first call, every time, on any human remains outside a cemetery.

4 The 24-hour clock.

If the remains are Native American, the coroner must contact the Native American Heritage Commission within 24 hours — §7050.5(c). Ask who is handling it and note the name.

5 The 48-hour window.

The Commission names the most likely descendants; once granted access, they have 48 hours to say what dignity requires — Pub. Resources Code §5097.98. Their word governs treatment.

6 Write it down.

Date, time, who you called, who answered, what was said — the event only. Nothing sacred goes on paper. The record is what makes the protocol real.

| These are our relatives. Treat the ground like a funeral, because it is one.