

Oregon MUFON Investigator's Guide

An Oregon MUFON Document

by

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Abstract

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This “best practices” guide explains how to do UFO investigation for Oregon MUFON. It also discusses general requirements for investigators. This document is intended for all UFO investigators new to Oregon MUFON, either new to Oregon from out-of-state (or country) or simply new to UFO investigation as a Field Investigator trainee or a newly certified MUFON Field Investigator.

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INTRODUCTION

As you know, UFO investigation in our society is not a prestigious or officially professional field of endeavor, but, even so, MUFON seeks to promote professional conduct in the pursuit of UFO investigation leading eventually to the solution of the UFO mystery.

This document lays out the things you need to know to be a successful Oregon MUFON investigator. After you finish reading through the material here, you'll know all you need to know to be a "professional" UFO investigator.

BEING A UFO INVESTIGATOR

Not everyone can be a good, competent, professional UFO investigator. Here's what it takes:

- You have a deep curiosity about the UFO phenomenon.
- You have a willingness to always be a professional. See *MUFON Code of Ethics* later.
- You are organized and thorough when you do a task.
- You can communicate well with witnesses and UFO investigators alike.
- You can write up the results of your investigations.
- You are skeptical, but not an extreme skeptic or debunker.

Are you still reading? Then you probably have what it takes. Read on.

REWARDS OF INVESTIGATION

Mostly, being a competent UFO investigator is uncompensated work, but it does have its rewards. Among these are the following:

- Being a competent investigator will give you a sense of accomplishment. Not everyone can do this work. You should be proud of your work.
- Your case work as an investigator adds a little bit more to the total of UFO knowledge. And there is always the possibility that a case you will be assigned and work on will end up adding significantly to our knowledge about the UFO phenomenon. We know a lot about UFOs today only because of the dedicated efforts of the UFO investigators that came before us, and the history of ufology shows a lot of development in the field. In the 1950s, hardly anyone took abduction seriously. What a world of difference today!
- Field Investigators are filling a public need. If people didn't see things that are unusual to them, they would not report them to MUFON and other UFO data collection organizations. They want knowledge and information about the unusual event that they witnessed. In this day and age in the early years of the 21st century, most adult Americans know that they cannot count on their federal, state, or local governments, or the U.S. military, or the scientific establishment to take their UFO story seriously. So, they turn to us. We are their last (and only) resort to get some closure on the unusual event they witnessed. If we do our job right, the public is educated just a bit more about UFOs.
- You can help UFO abductees—mostly these days self-identified—adjust to a more healthy outlook on their understanding of themselves. As you know, a few people arrive on the doorstep of MUFON with stories about possible UFO abductions. And, MUFON has come to believe that many of these stories have some truth to them, whatever the ultimate truth about the UFO abduction phenomenon turns out to be.

Your Oregon MUFON Assistant State Director has helped many a UFO abductee attain some measure of peace over their anxiety about UFO-related things when he helped a number get competent psychotherapy—usually involving hypnotherapy. Over the years as these UFO abductees

came to understand more and more about the UFO abduction “syndrome,” they showed less and less anxiety and more and more acceptance of what was happening to them. Almost every one of these “abductees” seemed better off the more they came to know about UFOs in general and UFO abduction in particular. This can be a source of satisfaction for the UFO investigator. MUFON always seeks to refer potential UFO abductees to competent, professional psychotherapists and counselors *who are also knowledgeable about UFOs and abduction.*

You can probably think of other rewards for being a UFO investigator, but rest assured that one of the rewards is **not** monetary. Sad to say, there is no money in being seriously interested in UFOs. In fact, money flows *out* of your pocket not *in!*

REQUIREMENTS

Only two requirements stand between you and being a MUFON investigator:

- You must pass the MUFON investigator’s test with an 80% score or better.
- You must maintain a basic level of ethical behavior and competence in your volunteer work for MUFON.

If you can pass the test, you can join the ranks of Oregon MUFON’s other investigators, and, of course, you get an ID card from MUFON stating that you are a credentialed UFO investigator. MUFON is the largest UFO investigative organization in the world (outside of China, that is!).

Anyone in the public who takes more than a casual interest in UFOs soon comes across MUFON. Because of this, when you show your ID card to a prospective UFO witness (or other UFO-interested person), MUFON will likely be recognized, but you will probably have to explain what MUFON seeks to do and how it does it. So be prepared to explain the basics of MUFON. See the *MUFON Field Investigator’s Manual.*

YOUR BACKGROUND

It is certainly true that the more background you have, the better off you’ll be when you investigate UFOs. But whether you have a lot of background or a little, your biggest asset is your enthusiasm for doing a solid, professional job. Be someone MUFON can count on to do a thorough, competent job. And always remember that the State Director (SD) and Assistant State Director (ASD) stand behind you to help if you need it.

UFOs are a very complex phenomenon, and as such the study of UFOs touches on the following areas of knowledge and expertise (among others!):

- **History, ancient history, and archaeology.** The more you know about UFO history and history in general the more you will be able to evaluate the particular case you are working on. Know your history! See oregonmufon.com for lots of suggestions for the study of the history of UFOs.
- **Laboratory techniques.** The samples that are sometimes gathered from UFO landing sites or from UFO abductees may find their way to various scientific, engineering, medical, or biological laboratories. Learn what you can about what goes on in these laboratories. You are on the front-line when it comes to properly gathering UFO evidence in the field. Bad field samples means bad results in the lab.
- **Field study techniques.** The methods of crime scene investigators, accident investigators, field geologists, anthropologists, etc., are all models that we UFO investigators should emulate up to the level of our time, money, and expertise. Every UFO encounter takes place in a specific environment, and this environment is too often all there is to investigate beyond witness testimony because UFOs rarely leave physical traces or biological or medical traces. But a thorough investigation may reveal things that a cursory investigation might not.

- **Anthropology and cultural studies.** General knowledge about human beings and their cultural ideas and surroundings helps the ufologist put UFOs and reports of UFO entities into perspective. It is an undeniable fact that American cultural ideas—mainly derived from newspaper reports about UFOs over the years and entertainment media treatments of UFOs—affect how people view and even report UFOs to MUFON and other organizations. We need to know about that. See oregonmufon.com for more information.
- **Aerospace technology and astronomy.** Since UFOs seem to originate from outer space, knowledge about these topics is very useful to ufologists. The UFO investigator also needs to understand the basic concepts of observational astronomy since people mistakenly report planets, stars, and satellites as UFOs. See oregonmufon.com for suggestions on especially useful books in this area. (The astronomy-related SETI group seems not to be related to UFOs, so you can ignore them. They are a scientific cult group who think that ET will only “speak” to us through a certain small part of the electromagnetic spectrum. Thus, they spent millions of federal tax dollars aiming their radio telescopes at spots in the sky listening for ET. Needless to say, ET never phoned home, and your tax dollars were completely wasted. If these tax dollars had gone to ufology, we’d live in a different world today because with the money SETI got, ufologists would have proved many times over that ET is here right now and does not need to phone home!)
- **Military and/or intelligence establishment background.** The military has had a long history with the UFO. Every time you turn around, the military seems to have a connection with UFOs. Many UFO investigators have military experience. If *you* do, this helps you interpret new UFO testimony involving the military. Not a few prominent UFO investigators and other UFO-interested people have intelligence establishment backgrounds. When you meet these people, it will help you to evaluate their information if you have done your reading in the abundant literature about the U.S. intelligence establishment. See oregonmufon.com for suggested reading.
- **Chemistry, physics, engineering, etc.** UFOs have long been a source of evidence involving the physical sciences. How do UFOs propel themselves? What is the nature of the UFO-induced electromagnetic effects affecting a car or farmer’s tractor? What chemical changes occurred in the soil at a UFO landing event? Learn as much as you can about the physical sciences.
- **Biology, botany, physiology, medical science, animal science, farming expertise, etc.** UFOs affect living systems on a regular basis and you should work on getting as broad a background as you can in this area. Landing events leave traces sometimes that affect the biology of the event scene. Abductees describe implants, “scoop marks,” various physiological signs and symptoms, “medical procedures” performed by aliens, etc. Crop circles involve changes in plants you can see and some that you cannot. With a background in this area, when you read scientific papers about crop circle investigations, you’ll be able to understand the facts and concepts involved. Animal mutilations involve the death and strange mutilation of various animals, domestic and wild. The more you know about this important area, the better off you’ll be. You’ll be able to ask better questions in UFO, crop circle, and animal mutilation cases.
- **Paranormal studies and information.** A close reading of the best of the UFO case literature eventually leads you to the whole can of worms of the paranormal. This one area of study will help you understand UFOs perhaps more than any other. Just be sure you read the best of the literature that describes and tries to make sense out of paranormal phenomena. See oregonmufon.com for some good books introducing you to the field.
- **Psychology.** You are dealing with people a lot when you investigate UFOs, so the more you know about psychology, the better off you’ll be. Interviewing techniques are especially useful and important to know about. See your *MUFON Field Investigator’s Manual*. Also, it helps to know a bit about people who have a loose grasp on reality—the mentally ill. They are out there, and they might end up telling you a UFO story. Find out the basics about mental disorders at your local bookstore, library, or college.
- **Debunkery.** Unfortunately, ufology has to put up with various irrational individuals who think they know all about UFOs when they have never written up a single UFO case report. Talk about speaking from ignorance! Lots of people do it, and some make a habit of doing it all the time, and they

join debunking organizations so they can get real good at misleading the innocent public. See more at oregonmufon.com.

- **Philosophy, logic, reasoning, fallacies, etc.** Sometimes, if you really get into the articles in UFO magazines or especially online on the Internet, the arguments for and against certain UFO cases and facts get very long and involved. Knowing as much as you can in the area of proper argumentation is important. The study of philosophy will prepare you for discussions about “what does it all mean?” concerning UFOs. Ultimately, if UFOs are real (and they are!), people educated in the Western European tradition of what is real and what is not will have to change their minds. This day is coming. Be prepared by learning the basics about philosophy as it is currently discussed.

Be Prepared: Be Informed

You do not have to be an expert in any of these areas, of course. But it will greatly help your contributions to ufology if you gain as much expertise as you reasonably can. Perhaps you'd like to know more about physical traces. Then look into chemistry, soil science, and botany. Consider taking some courses. If you can't do that, then at least use your local library and seek out authoritative books in your areas of interest and start your study.

The bottom line is: the more you know about ordinary knowledge and information, the more valuable you are to ufology and your local Oregon MUFON investigation team. Always be working on learning more background material concerning the areas of ufology and UFO investigation that interest you.

MUFON FIELD INVESTIGATOR'S MANUAL

The *MUFON Field Investigator's Manual* is your “bible” for field investigation. In order to pass the MUFON Field Investigator's test, you will have to study the manual at least to some extent depending on your background. But always turn first to this manual when you have a question about how to proceed in your investigation. Also, be sure to turn to your SD and ASD when you have questions the manual does not answer. There is a wealth of information in the manual. Be sure to use it!

MUFON CODE OF ETHICS

As you go forward with your education in UFO investigation, you should always seek to maintain the highest standards of professional integrity when dealing with UFO witnesses, media people, and the public. To help you in this, MUFON has published a Code of Ethics in its *MUFON Field Investigator's Manual*. You should read and study this Code of Ethics and always uphold its values and practices throughout your career as a MUFON UFO Field Investigator and member of MUFON.

MUFON's primary goal is to convince the scientific and scholarly establishment in America and around the world that the study of UFOs is a worthwhile enterprise. MUFON hopes to accomplish this by practicing and upholding the best scientific and scholarly methods that it is capable of. MUFON has limited resources and cannot sponsor or carry out extensive scientific or scholarly research, but the research that it does do should always be done to the highest standards that it is capable of. One aspect of research and investigation that MUFON members can easily accomplish is promoting and adhering to the Code of Ethics. Let the MUFON Code of Ethics be your guide and stick to it.

Permission for Minors Needed

Oregon MUFON policy for investigation of cases where a minor is involved is to get permission from a parent or guardian. Verbal permission is sufficient. The age of majority in Oregon is 18 years old.

As soon as you understand that you are working with a minor, you should seek permission. Be sure to look at the birth date on the CMS report before you make initial contact. The initial contact should make sure the minor knows you cannot continue with an investigation without parental permission.

You should terminate your contact with a minor after only a few contacts if parental permission is not forthcoming. ***You should have no face-to-face meetings with minors unless you get parental permission. You also should have a parent, guardian, or other responsible adult present at a face-to-face meeting with a minor.***

COMMUNICATION

Communication skills are paramount in a MUFON investigator. When the need arises as a UFO investigator, you should be able to communicate effectively with four groups of people:

- UFO witnesses.
- Your Oregon MUFON SD, ASD, Chief Investigator, State Section Directors, and other MUFON UFO investigators.
- The UFO-interested public.
- Newspaper, TV, radio, and Internet media people.

UFO Witnesses

Your communication skills will be tested more here because how you approach and deal with a potential UFO witness will determine how much information you get from the witness, and how successfully you conclude a case both for the benefit of the UFO witness and the benefit of MUFON. Most UFO witnesses are happy to talk to you—at least to further explain their sighting of a (to them) puzzling experience. These witnesses have usually seen something puzzling in the sky or far away on or near the ground. They have had their curiosity aroused enough to report the sightings and are seeking confirmation that what they saw is either truly puzzling or can be identified with something that seems plausible to them.

The cooperation of UFO witnesses is easy to get and they will generally spend some time with you to “get the facts straight.” This amounts to perhaps 90% of cases that you will be assigned. These are the easy ones—whether the case is identified (though sometimes the witness is disappointed and you may have to deal with that to some extent) or truly puzzling and becomes a MUFON “unknown.”

However, some witnesses may be somewhat difficult to deal with because of a range of factors. Here are some things for you to think about as you first approach a UFO witness on a new case:

- *The witness may be involved in a very close encounter and be upset. (Not uncommon in close encounter cases.)* You can prepare yourself for this by reading the witness's CMS description of their UFO sighting/close encounter. The physically closer the sighting apparently is, the more the witness is likely to be emotionally affected by his or her sighting. These witnesses should be approached with plenty of care with particular attention being paid to the MUFON Code of Ethics. When people become emotional, their ability to relate what has happened to them may be impaired. Their story may only come out slowly over months time. Sometimes a professional psychotherapist may become involved in the case for the good of the UFO witness. Professional psychotherapists are trained to deal with people under emotional stress. MUFON investigators need to be aware of this and work with appropriately credentialed psychotherapists. Ask your SD or ASD to recommend appropriate psychotherapists if you suspect a deep, emotionally upsetting component to a witness's experience.
- *The witness may be faking a UFO story. (Happens once in a while.)* Occasionally, young men (usually, men or boys) may get a thrill out of faking a UFO story. Always approach every UFO witness as a professional and handle all cases professionally, even when you know or suspect that a witness is not telling the truth about his or her (supposed) experience. Alert the SD or ASD that you suspect a case is a hoax or otherwise faked story as soon as you can. You can consult with the SD or ASD as to how to proceed. Usually a decision is made to gently disengage from the case.
- *The witness may be mentally unstable. (Happens rarely.) Remember that mentally unstable people do exist in society and they may end up talking to you about a “UFO” event.* It is a fact that

there is no officially recognized mental disorder whose primary component involves UFOs, but even so, mentally unstable people may appear as witnesses in UFO cases sometimes. Perhaps as many as 1% of the population is affected by a mental disorder at some time in their lives. So, they are out there. Remember, many mental disorders are characterized by emotional or cognitive deficits. These deficits may impair your ability to not only “get the facts,” but also to help the “witness” to come to some understanding about his or her “UFO experience.” Alert the SD or ASD that you suspect a UFO witness may be mentally unstable as soon as you can. You can consult with the SD or ASD as to how to proceed. Usually a decision is made to gently disengage from the case.

- *The witness may be an agent provocateur from our government. (Very rare.)* Sadly, the U.S. government has engaged in UFO disinformation and coverup of UFO information and has also actively disrupted citizen-based UFO activity in the past. Thus, a prudent UFO investigator should be aware that any potential UFO witness may be an agent provocateur of his or her own government. (Other governments are involved in nefarious UFO counterintelligence activities, too, of course. We assume they keep their activities to their own nations!) Your ASD may have been involved in an extensive case of agent provocateur activity in the form of a supposed UFO witness in the mid-1990s. We caught the UFO witness not telling the truth about ordinary things involving her work. She also did not exhibit the “normal” UFO close encounter witness behavior. For your ASD, the case involved some odd phone interference activity, too. Again, alert the SD or ASD that you suspect a UFO witness may be an agent provocateur as soon as you can. You can consult with the SD or ASD as to how to proceed. Usually a decision is made to gently disengage from the case.

Oregon MUFON Members

Your most important communications in Oregon MUFON will be with the SD because he (or she) must approve of your handling of your UFO cases. As your cases progress, keep the SD and ASD informed of your work by sending periodic email or by calling on the phone. The SD or ASD may make suggestions about the case as you do your investigation, evaluate the evidence, and write up the case.

You will also want to contact your State Section Director if you are assigned one. He or she should also be kept abreast of any on-going cases you have. And, of course, you are always free to communicate with your fellow Oregon MUFON Field Investigators up to the extent of keeping any case information confidential if witnesses (or others directly involved in the case) request this.

Only your SD, ASD, and State Section Director should know any confidential information about the cases you are working on. Always be sure to note whether a UFO witness has checked the Anonymous check box in his or her CMS report. If the witness *has* checked Anonymous, then only the SD and ASD should know the names and identifying information about the witness.

General information about your cases can and should be shared by you with your Oregon MUFON colleagues.

The Public

Feel free to discuss any non-confidential information about Oregon MUFON or your UFO cases with the interested public—your family, your friends, your workmates, and the public at large. Of course, you should be sensitive to the fact that not everyone wants to know the details of UFO phenomena. For example, cattle mutilation and UFO abductee information can be very graphic and upsetting to the uninitiated. In fact, all the UFO information in its entirety that we are reasonably certain of today is disquieting in its implications for an understanding of humanity—who we are, where we come from, and where we might be going. So, choose your audience and what you say about UFOs and your work with Oregon MUFON wisely.

Remember, you are a professional all the time when it comes to UFO information and your work with Oregon MUFON. Ultimately, the work you do investigating UFOs will further our collective understanding about the phenomenon just that little tiny bit more. UFOs are not to be taken lightly.

If you come across opportunities to speak publicly about UFOs, you should contact the SD or ASD. You may be the one who does the speaking, but since you are a MUFON Field Investigator, the professional thing to do is consult with Oregon MUFON and perhaps even MUFON headquarters itself. The SD or ASD will be your guide.

Media People

Your SD and ASD need to know if you make contact with any representatives of the news or entertainment media. As you know, UFOs are frequently portrayed in an inaccurate manner by the news and entertainment media in America (and around the world). Because of this, Oregon MUFON seeks to limit its contact with media people. We would like to be as assured as we can that UFOs and Oregon MUFON will get fair treatment. We cannot always control this, but we need to try.

Your ASD has been treated with ridicule in the past, but he has also been treated fairly. Sometimes you can get a sense of the moral character of the media person you are dealing with by careful evaluation of his or her manner of approaching and dealing with you before the relationship goes very far.

The Oregon MUFON website (oregonmufon.com) has a page for media people that spells out what kinds of media coverage Oregon MUFON seeks.

In summary, feel free to refer media people to oregonmufon.com, but be sure to tell the SD and ASD about your feelings about the media people who contact you.

THINGS YOU NEED

Being a Field Investigator is like being a crime detective or accident investigator. You must use your powers of observation. You must use your interviewing skills. You must use your best evidence gathering expertise. You must use your best logic skills and knowledge base to draw reasonable conclusions about what all your evidence means. Your *MUFON Field Investigator's Manual* will teach you a lot about doing all these things. Read and study it. When it comes to drawing conclusions about what your evidence truly implies, be sure to use the expertise of your SD or ASD—currently, they have over 60 years of experience between them!

Since most of your evidence gathering will be via the interview process, you need to have a few simple tools:

- Pens, pencils, and notebooks for note-taking.
- A tape recorder for recording interviews.
- A computer to do research with, prepare reports on, communicate with witnesses, Oregon MUFON, and MUFON headquarters, etc.

If you are lucky enough to do field investigation, you may need the following:

- A long (100 ft) tape measure.
- Binoculars for viewing more closely distant terrain and objects at the UFO sighting spot.
- A compass for basic directions.
- A camera for documenting the general layout of the sighting spot, or for taking close-ups of possible physical trace evidence.
- A small trowel or shovel and plastic sample bags, and pens and tags to make labels.

These are the main things you'll need. Refer to your *MUFON Field Investigator's Manual* for more things you may need in your investigation of a case. It is your primary reference. Please note that before you invest in some exotic piece of investigative equipment, your fellow Field Investigators may have what you need. Be sure to ask your SD or ASD first.

A UFO ID Manual

Second to your *MUFON Field Investigator's Manual*, you should seriously consider putting the following book on your shelf:

- Allan Hendry. *The UFO Handbook: A Guide to Investigating, Evaluating, and Reporting UFO Sightings*. Garden City, NY: Doubleday (Dolphin), 1979. 297pp. ISBN 0-385-14348-6.

This book is old now, but is still the best UFO identification manual yet published. You can still find copies at some large used bookstores, but you will almost certainly find it on the Internet nowadays if you can't find a copy in town. And you may be able to find a copy in your county or other public library system, but don't count on it. The book is just too old.

Hendry's book is just as much about IFOs as it is about UFOs. And you need to have a thorough knowledge of all the usual suspects when it comes to competent UFO identification. He also tells you about the characteristics of genuine UFOs, that is, MUFON's "unknown" in the CMS. Get this book and study it. This will repay your efforts many times over.

See also **APPENDIX F: OREGON MUFON ID CANDIDATES LIST** for most of Hendry's common IFO IDs and some new ones from the last ten years of UFO investigation in Oregon.

Getting Organized

Since UFO investigation is similar to the work that, for example, police detectives and accident investigators do, you need to be organized like they are. Here are some ways for you to get and stay organized as you pursue your UFO investigation career.

Office and Personal Items. You should buy and use these items just for your UFO investigation.

- Get a special notebook just for your UFO investigation notes. It will be your field notebook—the one you take with you in your on-site field investigation visits. Get a notebook bound like a book that has permanent pages, for example, like a school composition book that has lined paper. Laboratory notebooks are excellent though expensive. You want a permanent record of your UFO investigations so you do not want a loose leaf or spiral bound notebook where pages can easily tear out and go missing. Your entries should have the date and subject at the beginning. Then make whatever notes and drawings you need to.
- Get yourself a special briefcase with pens, pencils, a voice recorder, your special field notebook, etc., just for your UFO investigations. Thus, when you get a call to investigate, you pick up your UFO briefcase and you are automatically ready and prepared.
- Set aside a special place—a filing cabinet drawer or file box—just for your UFO file folders. Get a bunch of file folders. Make one for each case. Keep all the reference material of a loose nature, such as photos, drawings, CD ROMs, and additional paper materials for each case together in one place.
- Get yourself two loose leaf notebooks. Name one "Oregon MUFON Investigator's Notebook." Keep all your important information concerning Oregon MUFON and your volunteer career with us as an investigator in this notebook. Name the other one "Oregon MUFON Cases Notebook." Keep all your completed UFO reports, important printed out emails, etc., in this one—organized by UFO case.

Computer Organization. These days, personal computers are almost a necessity of life. We want you to have one and use it for your Oregon MUFON Field Investigator career. You need to have email communication with the State Director (SD), Assistant State Director (ASD), Chief Investigator (CI), your State Section Director (SSD) (if you have one), and your fellow Field Investigators (FIs). The primary means of communication at Oregon MUFON is via email on a personal computer. We don't send out letters unless absolutely necessary.

You also need to periodically check the *oregonmufon.com* and *mufon.com* websites for any new information. You should check once a week or so. And, of course, you need to learn to use the MUFON Case Management System (CMS) on *mufon.com*. See **Case Management System** later in this guide. So, get yourself a Mac or PC today and hook it up to the Internet!

You should use something like the following to get organized on your computer.

- Organize your email by making a special folder to hold your Oregon MUFON-related email communications. Subdivide this folder into an “Oregon MUFON Business” folder and an “Oregon MUFON Cases” folder. Further subdivide the Cases folder by cases when you need to.
- In your computer file system, put all your UFO stuff in one folder (directory). Create a folder for “Oregon MUFON Business.” Create another folder for all your cases. Within your “Oregon MUFON Cases” folder create one folder per case. Name each case folder for the primary witness in the case. Sometimes one person may have multiple sightings. If you run into this—and we have—make a name up for each individual case. Create a name using the location and some important characteristic of the sighting, for example, like “Eastbank Esplanade Cigar UFO” case. Within each case, organize the report you generate, the important emails you have, the Internet research materials you gather, and the graphics files you might get from the witness into “Report,” “Emails,” “Research Materials,” “Graphical Items,” and other ways to break down your case information. But don’t make it too complicated!
- For writing reports, Oregon MUFON recommends Microsoft Word for the PC and Pages for the Mac. Other word editing and processing programs that generate Microsoft Word .doc format are fine, too. The final form for all Oregon MUFON case reports is the Adobe Portable Document Format (PDF) file format. If you have a PC and can’t generate this format, then pass along your final report in Microsoft Word .doc format to your SD or ASD. They will put your case study report into PDF format.

Be organized in your report, too! Every report should have a title page, table of contents, Introduction, Sighting Narrative, Environment, Evidence, Analysis, and Conclusion in that order. See **Writing the Case Report** below.

- Consider using the outline feature in Pages or Microsoft Word or getting an outliner program. Mac users can use the outlining feature in Pages. PC users can use the Microsoft Word outlining feature. Keep important data about *all* of your cases in one place on your computer so you can have quick access to the information and not get too confused when you are dealing with numerous cases, which can sometimes be more than one case at a time when things get busy! See **APPENDIX A: EXAMPLE OF CASE OUTLINE** for a typical case outline entry that goes in your file that holds the outlines of all your individual cases. This is your quick reference file for all your cases.

Staying Organized

In summary, be sure to do the following things to stay on top of your UFO investigative life:

- Gather together your field paraphernalia and keep it handy.
- Get and study Alan Hendry’s book.
- Get and keep a UFO field notebook.
- Create a physical UFO files system and keep it organized.
- Create your two loose leaf notebooks: “Oregon MUFON Investigator’s Notebook” and “Oregon MUFON Cases Notebook” and keep them up-to-date.
- On your PC, create a special directory structure using folders: one for “Oregon MUFON Business” and one for “Oregon MUFON Cases.” Organize the cases by primary witness, then specific case(s) of the witness, then folders for “Resources,” “Graphic Material,” and “Report.”
- Use Microsoft Word .doc format on your PC, or for the Mac, the Pages native format. Remember that all final reports should end up in PDF format. Your SD or ASD can help you with this.

- On your computer, use an outliner or the outline feature in a word processor to keep all of your cases information in one, easy-to-use file. Put in just the important things about your cases. See **APPENDIX A: EXAMPLE OF CASE OUTLINE** for ideas about categories of information.

CASE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

MUFON headquarters has developed an excellent online Internet system—the Case Management System (CMS)—to handle the many reports of UFOs that come to it. Anyone from the public can access the MUFON website through their computer browser and report a UFO event to MUFON. Their report information is taken from the web page they fill out and is stored in the MUFON UFO reports database. Part of this database of UFO information is made available to the public through the MUFON website. The public can look up basic information submitted by the public to locate sightings anywhere and at any time in the world.

Part of the data in the CMS database is, however, not available to the public. This involves, for example, the UFO witness’s name.

The other part of the CMS database that is not public is the data about a UFO report that MUFON UFO Field Investigators generate. When you log on to the CMS database as a UFO investigator, you see the information about the cases assigned to you. This includes information about the status of a case, that is, where the case is in the process of investigation and its final disposition in conclusion after you have finished your investigation. You also see any attachments that you have uploaded to CMS such as your case report file and any supporting information (photo files, drawing files, etc.).

The CMS is a great tool for handling and organizing your UFO case reports. You will be using it a lot. Get to know it well. See the *MUFON Case Management System (CMS) Member’s User Guide* for more information.

A Word About CMS Case Status and Disposition

At any given point in a UFO report’s history, it has a status and a disposition. Here’s the lowdown on what the statuses and dispositions mean and who assigns them. See the *MUFON Case Management System (CMS) Member’s User Guide* for more information. The following tables should help you sort things out quickly.

Table 1. CMS Status Codes

CMS Status Code	Who Assigns It	Description
Submitted	CMS automatically assigns this.	This code simply means that someone—either a member of the public or a MUFON investigator—has entered UFO report data into the CMS database and clicked the Save button on the web page. No one has done any investigating or even looking at the data at this point in the investigation process. The disposition is “null.”
Assigned	The SD or ASD or CI or SSD assigns this.	An SD, ASD, or SSD finds an investigator and enters his or her name into CMS and CMS then changes the status to “assigned.” The disposition is still “null.”

CMS Status Code	Who Assigns It	Description
Completed	The Field Investigator assigns this.	This is the status a Field Investigator (FI) assigns the case once he or she completes his or her investigation report and attaches it to the sighting report along with any corroborating data like photos for instance. <i>You as the FI change this manually in CMS</i> , or the SD can if an FI is not assigned to the case. You must click the Save button, of course, to make the change to "Completed." The SD can now assign a disposition code if he or she agrees with your conclusions about the case: "Insufficient Data," "IFO," "Hoax," or "Unknown."
Incomplete	The SD or ASD assigns this.	If the SD believes more work needs to be done, he or she can send a case back to the FI for additional investigation work. A text field is provided just below the status field for comments by the SD to send to the FI on exactly what he or she is looking for. A disposition code is not assigned yet; it is still "null."

Table 2. CMS Disposition Codes

CMS Disposition Code	Who Assigns It	Description
Unknown - UAV	The FI assigns this; the SD approves this.	After all reasonable investigation fails to determine the report as indicating something of terrestrial origin or a hoax, it is then classified as an object of unknown origin, and <i>if it is described as having a structured, craft-like appearance</i> , it is assigned "Unknown - UAV." (UAV means unknown aerial vehicle.) (The status code is "Completed.")
Unknown - Other	The FI assigns this; the SD approves this.	After all reasonable investigation fails to determine the report as indicating something of terrestrial origin or a hoax, it is then classified as an object of unknown origin, and <i>if its description is not structured and craft-like</i> , it is assigned "Unknown - Other." (The status code is "Completed.")
IFO - Natural Phenomenon	The FI assigns this; the SD approves this.	If the likelihood is high that what the witness saw was a planet, meteorite, or other known <i>natural</i> object or phenomenon, then the case is assigned the "IFO - Natural Phenomenon" disposition code. (The status code is "Completed.")
IFO - Man-made Object	The FI assigns this; the SD approves this.	If the likelihood is high that what the witness saw was a balloon, aircraft, or other known <i>man-made</i> object (or phenomenon), then the case is assigned the "IFO - Man-made Object" disposition code. (The status code is "Completed.")
IFO - Identified Other	The FI assigns this; the SD approves this.	If the likelihood is high that what the witness saw was not a planet, meteorite, or other known natural object or phenomenon, <i>but fits into some other identified category</i> , then it is assigned the "IFO - Identified Other" disposition code. (The status code is "Completed.")
Hoax - Key-stroke	The FI assigns this; the SD approves this.	If you as the FI recommend a "hoax" conclusion for your case and the SD agrees and <i>if the hoax involves someone merely typing or saying something intended to be taken seriously</i> , then assign the case the "Hoax - Keystroke" case disposition. (The status code is "Completed.")

CMS Disposition Code	Who Assigns It	Description
Hoax - Event	The FI assigns this; the SD approves this.	If you as the FI recommend a “hoax” conclusion for your case and the SD agrees and <i>if the hoax involves someone carrying out actual events beyond just typing and saying something intended to be taken seriously</i> , then assign the case the “Hoax - Event” case disposition. (The status code is “Completed.”)
Insufficient Data	The FI assigns this; the SD approves this.	Sometimes it is not possible to gather the data needed to decide if a case fits into any of the case disposition categories. In that case, the FI assigns the “Insufficient Data” disposition code and the SD approves it. (The status code is “Completed.”)

USEFUL COMPUTER PROGRAMS

A number of special programs may be of benefit to UFO investigators. Here’s a list of ones that we have used off and on in our investigations.

- *A general purpose photo editor.* Photoshop Elements or the pro version are excellent. For the Macintosh, a low cost robust and feature-laden program is Lemke’s Graphic Converter. For the PC, Paint Shop Pro and other low-cost programs are available and work fine. Always insist on a copy of JPGs and TIFFs as they originally come from a digital camera. Immediately do an “Information” command to see if the EXIF data looks in order. Sometimes editing programs will alter the EXIF data in JPGs and TIFFs to tell you whether the photo has been edited. If a JPG or TIFF file does *not* have EXIF data, do *not* go any further with your analysis because the photo could very well be a hoax.
- *A 3D sketching program.* These programs are generally expensive and hard to learn and are not worth your time. However, a simple one—as these programs go—is the free Google SketchUp. You may run into a situation in your investigations where you want to get a feeling for exactly how big an object would look if you have some reasonable knowledge of the size and distance limits of the UFO. In Google SketchUp, you can dimension things exactly and “twirl around” the UFO and observer’s position in 3-space to actually model pretty well how things probably looked. You can run this by your witness to get his or her reaction. Try this program if you are really ambitious. Find out more at sketchup.google.com.
- *A 2D sketching program.* There are many of these for the PC and Mac. Get one that is vector-based with some ability to combine the vector drawing with pixel-oriented images like photos. The alternative to using 3D or 2D drawing programs is to do a traditional drawing with pencil, ink, etc., and paper and then use a scanner to bring it into your computer to integrate it as an image in your report. On the Mac, we use OmniGraffle, the Pages drawing tools, and, sometimes, the old drawing tools in AppleWorks. PC people have many programs to choose from.
- *Google Earth.* This is an invaluable free program for Mac or PC. This gives you the ability to view the terrain with named landmarks like streets, bridges, buildings, parks, etc. A 3D effect can also be created in Google Earth by tilting the land surface. Really handy is the ability to measure precise distances with a measuring tool. Amazing and invaluable for our researchers!
- *Starry Night Enthusiast.* A stand-alone astronomy program that runs on your PC or Mac is not necessary, just a convenience. We like the Starry Night Enthusiast for a robust, mature general astronomy program. Note that you can easily get basic night sky, observational information from various Internet sites. See under *Internet Resources* later.
- *Screen capture.* You need a screen capture program on your Mac or PC. On the Mac, use the simple screen capture utility, Grabber. Many times, just displaying something on your screen and

capturing it with a screen capture utility is the simplest way to get a photo or document or other information into your UFO report.

- *Spreadsheet.* The standard here is Microsoft's Excel, of course, but there are other choices out there that may be cheaper. A new Mac program called Numbers is almost as good as Excel since you buy it for \$60 on amazon.com in the iWork package (which includes Pages and Keynote, the word processor and presentation programs) and it is a bit simpler to use. Use Excel or Numbers to deal with formulas and numbers in columns. This is not of a lot of use in UFO investigation, but if you've got to deal with a lot of numbers (like maybe readings from a Geiger counter from a lot of points on the ground around a supposed UFO landing site!), then a spreadsheet might be just the ticket.
- *Calculator.* There are many PC and Mac calculator programs to choose from. The Apple-supplied Mac "Calculator" program is just fine for us.
- *Math typesetting program.* If you find yourself dealing with some decent numbers for UFO size, distance, altitude, etc., you might want to try a little trigonometry and ratio and proportion to figure out new numerical information about your UFO case. Using a math typesetting program to get the equations into your reports is a help. Microsoft Word users are home free. They've already got a great math typesetting program integrated into Word. Mac users will find that the current version of Pages (4.0.5) does not. However, the Apple-supplied Grapher utility has a limited ability to create equations which you can cut and paste into Pages documents. Also, the old AppleWorks application has a decent math typesetting program that also cuts and pastes into Pages OK. Also, for the Mac, check out the Formulator math typesetting program.

INTERNET RESOURCES

The Internet is an invaluable resource for OM investigators. We've collected some website URLs for you to use in your investigations.

Search Engines

- *google.com.* Google is the big search engine. But others will do just fine, too. Be sure to use the advanced features of the search engines to narrow your search. Always check the name of the witness in a new case to be sure the person is not associated with any kind of hoaxing or particularly skeptical or debunking activity on the Internet. Type in "Joe Smith' skeptic" or "Joe Smith' hoax" or other search strings to check out this kind of information about your UFO witness before you contact them. This search might provide background information that corroborates what the witness reported and give you additional information. The more you know, the better off you are. Be creative. For example, maybe this person is into New Age things. Type in "Joe Smith' 'new age'" or something like this. Knowledge of this might help you interpret what they tell you about their sighting.
- *news.google.com.* If your witness says there were articles in some newspaper about his or her sighting, then this site could help you locate these articles.

General Information Sites

- *wikipedia.com.* This is a free invaluable general encyclopedia on the Internet. We've looked up ultralight airplanes, meteors, balloons, etc., to get a first look at something. The references at the end of articles then send you off to good sites for further information. This is often better than doing a Google search to locate authoritative sites.
- *about.com.* Another general information site with live people ("guides") who can be a research source for you along with articles about UFO-related topics and general information.
- *whitepages.com.* Check the witness's name in this general phone book to make sure that CMS information matches with public information about your witness.

- *multcolib.org*. This is the Multnomah County Library site. You can ask reference librarians questions via email that might further your UFO case research. Down state investigators should investigate the online resources of their own county libraries.

Airplanes

- <http://www.aerospaceweb.org/question/electronics/q0263.shtml>. A quick rundown of typical external aircraft lights.
- http://www.portofportland.com/PDX_home.aspx. This is the Portland International Airport site. You will find an excellent little map-based, take off and landing application under the *Noise Management* menu choice on this website (http://www.portofportland.com/Noise_Mgmt_Home.aspx). Look for the WebTrak Neighborhood Flight Tracking facility at the bottom of the page. Click all the way through and get to the WebTrak map. You will open on current flights into and out of PDX and other nearby flights in the air above the Portland Metro area. To find out if your UFO witness may have just seen an airplane, uncheck the *Show current flights* check box and set the date and time of your UFO sighting. The application then gets the relevant data and shows you graphically what was going on in the air at the specified date and time. Note that you can find basic flight data like flight number and aircraft type, too. There's one drawback, however. The database doesn't go back further in time than about two months previous. So, get right on this invaluable service provided by the Port of Portland and PDX Airport.
- <http://flightaware.com/>. This is a website that tracks commercial flights. You can put in a departure and arrival airport and it will show you all the flights between them. It gives information on the carrier, the plane, arrival time, and the route. If you select a particular flight that has already arrived, it gives you more detailed information such as latitude and longitude, bearing, altitude, and more at one minute intervals from takeoff to landing. If you register (just a simple email register), you can get data going back four months. The last piece is useful if you know how to use it. I cut and pasted the information into a spreadsheet in google documents. Then I imported the table into Google's Fusion Tables, this site allows you to visualize data easily. Since it has latitude and longitude information, you get a google map that looks like this one at <http://www.google.com/fusiontables/DataSource?snapid=S181593tbFQ>. If you click on the pin heads, it gives the details for that moment.

Astronomy and Space

- *spaceweather.com*. A nice site for observational space and astronomy phenomena like satellite flybys that might be mistaken for UFOs.
- *usno.navy.mil*. The official U.S. Naval Observatory site. Lots of useful astronomical data is here.
- *heavens-above.com*. Another useful site that has space and astronomy observational phenomena. Must register for it to be really useful, however.
- www2.jpl.nasa.gov/basics. A JPL and NASA site. This is essentially an educational site. It has a free online course on astronomy and space travel. You can take a quiz and get a certificate.
- synapses.co.uk/astro/astro.html. An astronomy professor's textbook course online on the principles of astronomy.
- science.nasa.gov/realtime/. A satellite tracking NASA site.
- www.aero.org/capabilities/cords/debris-basics.html. An orbital debris re-entry page.
- *amsmeteors.org*. The website of the American Meteor Society.
- roland.grc.nasa.gov/-dglover/dictionary. A dictionary of technical terms for aerospace use.

Earth and Environment

- *usgs.gov*. The U.S. Geological Society website. Good for general information about our Earth environment.
- *noaa.gov*. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration website. Good for general information about the weather.

Maps

- maps.google.com. Maps covering the entire U.S. and some countries, too.
- eduplace.com/ss/maps. This site has simplified maps of states and other countries. Be sure to “source” these maps if you use them in a report since you need permission to publish. OM is a non-profit corporation so they will probably look the other way.

Math Helps

- www.1728.com/angsize.htm. An angular size calculator page.

Person Research

- veromi.net. A good site that gives free places, age, businesses, relatives.

Technology

- radartutorial.eu/01.basics/rb04.en.html. The basic principles of radar operation.
- vectorsite.net/ttradar.html. An introduction to radar technology.

Weather

- wunderground.com. The Weather Underground website. This is great for getting exact weather information to the hour at any place in the U.S. back to 1970. Type in the zip code or city name of the place you need weather for. Scroll down to History & Almanac and select the date for your UFO event. You'll get wind direction, wind speeds, temperatures, etc., by the hour.
- <http://weather.uwyo.edu/upperair/sounding.html>. This is a site maintained by the University of Wyoming, Department of Atmospheric Science, where you can obtain winds aloft direction and speed. The only weather stations in Oregon that record this information are in Salem and Medford. This information may come in handy to rule in or out an ID of a balloon.

MUFON'S SPECIAL SIP PROGRAM

Note as of July 2010: The SIP program is not longer in effect. This program may be revived on contract with BAASS, or MUFON itself may revive the program in some form if funds become available.

In 2009, MUFON created a special rapid response team of investigators to quickly investigate especially important cases. This program is called the STAR Team Impact Program (or SIP). The cases selected for rapid response generally involve any case where the UFO is very close to the witness or where physical or environmental evidence is possible. These cases (not very many) are the responsibility of the STAR team. They take over the case and unless you are a member of the STAR team, you do not participate in the investigation as a regular Field Investigator. (When this program was initiated, all MUFON members were invited to apply to various STAR team positions. At least one investigator from each state was desired for the program. Currently, Oregon has only two STAR team members—the SD and the CI.)

STAR team dispatchers constantly monitor what cases are reported to MUFON's CMS. The dispatchers make preliminary phone or email contact with all cases if possible and ask a few questions to categorize each case. If it fits STAR team criteria, the case is then investigated by STAR team members only. Regular state investigators may be invited to participate in SIP cases, but probably not.

This special investigative unit is actually paid when they participate in investigations, and the dispatchers are paid hourly wages for contacting the witnesses and categorizing cases as they come in. MUFON doesn't have the resources to do this, and it is only because of the generosity of Robert Bigelow of the Bigelow Aerospace Advanced Spaces Studies (BAASS) company that this program exists. The program is periodically reviewed to see how effective it has been and could be dropped after any contract period.

TYPICAL INVESTIGATION SCENARIO

The following step-by-step scenario is a “typical” investigation scenario. Note that how you go about investigating your assigned UFO case is not subject to a lot of variety in the initial stages, but may vary some depending on how complex the case gets and how much evidence there is.

Follow the steps below to carry out a successful UFO investigation.

1. **Accept the Case Assignment.** Most of the time, the SD emails or calls you about accepting a new case that has come to MUFON, mostly through the CMS. (The SD and ASD are notified of all new cases for their respective states via automated email directly from the CMS.) The SD then discusses the case with you so you can decide whether you want to accept it. If you accept, do your best to carry the case to completion. It is your case and you own it. Start the investigation as soon as you can, especially if a case has a recent date within days or weeks of the event. The farther in the past the date, the less urgency there is unless the SD has made a determination that the case is important for some reason.

2. **Study the CMS Report.** Usually, new cases come to MUFON through the CMS. The SD sends you the CMS case data via email or you can log on to the MUFON website and access the CMS under your MUFON login account. All of your assigned cases show up for you when you login to the CMS. See the *MUFON Case Management System (CMS) Member's User Guide*.

Before you go any farther. Be sure to see if the Anonymous check box is checked. Always honor the witness's desire to be anonymous if requested. Also, check the date of birth. If the witness is a minor, you must seek permission from the minor's parent or guardian before continuing with an investigation. See Permission for Minors Needed above.

Familiarize yourself with all the facts in the CMS report. Try to re-enact in your head what the reported UFO event must have been like. Doing this suggests many things likely left out by the witness. Make sure the basic story makes sense to you. Think about time, place, season, etc. Does the story hold together?

3. **Write up Your Questions.** After you study the CMS report, you'll have some questions. Write them down and have them ready when you contact the witness for clarifications.
4. **Do Background Research.** Basic research is very easy in the era of the Internet. Use Google or your favorite search engine to look up satellites, or planet positions, or balloons, or what-have-you suggested by your study of the witness's report. And, you might even look up the witness's name on the Internet. Does he or she have a website? What can you find out about the town he or she lives in. Does the address check out OK? Use Google Earth to get a look at the place where the UFO was sighted. Use the Internet! It is a tremendous resource for UFO investigators.
5. **Get Clarifications from the SD or ASD.** At this point, if you have any questions about your case, check with the SD or ASD. They can probably help you out. They are there to help you do a successful investigation.
6. **Make the Initial Contact.** When you are prepared and ready, talk to the witness. You can do this by emailing the witness if he or she has an email address or you can call on the telephone if there is no email address and only a telephone number.

Email Contact. For your first email contact, write in a formal style. Say “Dear Mr. Jones,”. Say “Sincerely yours,” at the end. Make it like a business letter because that is what you are conducting—business about a UFO event. Identify who you are in the first paragraph. “This is Keith Rowell, MUFON UFO Field Investigator, and I have been assigned to your case of September 24, 2006, where you described a UFO doing . . . Do you have a few moments to answer a few questions?” Be polite and don't overwhelm the witness with all your questions at once. Take it easy. In later emails, if any, you can let the witness dictate the tone. Most people are happy to adopt a more informal tone and address you on a first name basis. Remember you are a professional, however!

Phone Contact. For your first phone contact, take the same approach as in an initial email contact. Be professional and polite. Always identify yourself and your business within the first minute. They will decide if they want to talk. Be sure to ask if they have a few minutes to talk. Would another time be better for them? In Oregon, it is legal to tape record a conversation over the phone if only one party knows about it, but you should *never* secretly tape record a witness. If you decide later in the initial contact phone call that the witness might be amenable to being tape recorded, then ask. If they say “yes,” then turn on the tape recorder and say, “This is Keith Rowell, MUFON UFO investigator, talking to Mr. Jones who has witnessed a UFO. Is it OK if we record this conversation, Mr. Jones?” If he says, “yes” continue. If he says “no,” then, obviously, turn off the recorder.

7. **Let the Witness Tell His or Her Story.** During the initial contact, many witnesses want to go over the whole UFO story again. Just let them tell their story as much as they like. When they are “talked out,” you can begin asking the questions you have prepared in advance and any other questions that have occurred to you during the initial conversation.
8. **Analyze the Evidence.** After you’ve sent that initial email and got a response or after the initial phone conversation, analyze any new information or evidence that you’ve uncovered. There will probably be some. Think about questions that might clarify the information or evidence and formulate and ask them in further emails or phone conversations.
9. **Visit the Site If Necessary.** If you can and have the time, consider visiting the site of the UFO event. Remember you need to gather evidence at the site. Your camera is a great tool. Use it. Take photos of the points in the sky where the witness says he/she saw the UFO. Include the horizon, of course, or any other known objects for orientation. Don’t take any photos showing the face of the witness because we cannot use them in our reports for the Internet. Consider taking a photo of the witness’s back pointing to where he/she saw the UFO. Take other photos of the general environment. Make sure you take compass readings. Many times you can compare your photos with Google maps to get directions, but while you are there try to get oriented to the compass directions.

If the UFO is described as landing or very near the ground with suspected interaction or interference or effects on the environment whether they involve people, animals, terrain, plants, trees, etc., this will be a SIP case and you may or may not be involved. But sure to call in your SD or ASD if you have reports of any permanent environmental effects that may have slipped by the SIP screening procedure.

10. **Evaluate the Evidence.** Most UFO investigations are finished up in a couple of sessions of questions and answers. Most UFO events are simple lights in the sky. Some, however, are so unusual that you, the witness, and just about anyone else *cannot* think of any reasonable natural or human-made thing the UFO evidence points to. You’ve got a UFO then. If not, you’ve got an IFO. For MUFON, there are only four case dispositions for a UFO report: (1) Insufficient Data, (2) IFO, (3) Hoax, (4) Unknown. Figure out which one your UFO report is mostly like to be. Sometimes this is not so easy. Be sure to use the *MUFON Field Investigator’s Manual* and Allen Hendry’s invaluable *The UFO Handbook* to make a proper evaluation of all the pertinent evidence in your UFO case.
11. **Discuss with the SD or ASD.** Talk to the SD or ASD if you’ve got a hard-to-figure-out UFO report. Sometimes you just don’t have enough evidence to decide. Then a decision of “Insufficient Data” is the best category. Strive always, however, to resolve your UFO report into the IFO, Hoax, or Unknown case dispositions.
12. **Write up the Case Report.** Once you are quite satisfied with a successful conclusion to your investigation, you should write up a case report. This usually involves filling out the information required in the standard MUFON report format. This is found in **APPENDIX E: PROPER CMS INVESTIGATIVE REPORT FORM**. However, if you’ve got a really involved and interesting case, you might do a full blown Oregon MUFON Case Study report. Ask your SD or ASD for a model case report to follow so you don’t have to “re-invent the wheel.” You can use the format of the

Appaloosa Way UFO Case Study report online at *oregonmufon.com* or any other of the case reports online at *oregonmufon.com*.

13. **Upload Your Case Report to CMS.** There are two ways to get your report uploaded to CMS. First, write up your report in the standard MUFON report format in your favorite PC or Mac editor on your computer. (Be sure to save this report in your files about the case.) Then do either of the following:
 - (1) Copy all of the report from the editor and paste it into the Field Investigator Report text box for your case online in CMS.
 - (2) Upload your saved report file to CMS by using the File Attachments to Investigation Report file upload buttons. They are named "Choose File." Click on one of these and find your completed report file on your PC or Mac, and then upload the file to CMS. Be sure to put a note in the text box of the Filed Investigator Report section just above referring to your report that you uploaded as a file. MUFON prefers report files in Microsoft Word format (.doc). But you can do a text file (.txt) or Rich Text File format (.rtf) or Postscript Display Format file (.pdf).

See the *MUFON Case Management System (CMS) Member's User Guide*.

14. **Notify the SD.** Email the SD that you have uploaded your case report (and any supporting photos, drawings, videos, etc.) to the CMS. The SD then reads through your report and either approves it or sends it back to you for a little more work. Note that if the SD sends it back to you, then the status of the case is "Incomplete." Do any further work you need to, notify the SD, etc., until you are done. Usually, one pass is fine. You can notify the witness of your completion of the case report and your evaluation of their UFO report. However, the case report is not normally made public. Ask the SD about sending the case report to the witness. Be aware that some witnesses want to think they've seen a real UFO and may not like your evaluation if it is an IFO.

MAKING THE CASE DISPOSITION DECISION

MUFON's UFO investigations conclude in one of four case "disposition" categories: unknown, IFO, hoax, and insufficient data. It is the responsibility of the Field Investigator to make this decision. Beginning Field Investigators are encouraged to seek out the help of more experienced Field Investigators (FIs), State Section Directors (SSDs), Assistant State Directors (ASDs), State Directors (SDs), or others whenever desired.

Identification Candidates List

See **APPENDIX F: OREGON MUFON ID CANDIDATES LIST** for a list of common identifications for UFO reports as found in practice in Oregon and the United States.

To help give some structure and direction to the case disposition decision, Oregon MUFON has created the Identification Candidate list concept. The idea here is that as you move through your case and develop evidence, you naturally start thinking of natural or human-made stimuli that could have caused the witness to think he or she saw a "real UFO" and make a report.

For example, you might think that the solution to your UFO case is an airplane, and maybe even a specific kind of airplane like a crop duster. Or the solution might be a balloon, and maybe even a specific kind of balloon type object, such as a Chinese sky lantern. Write down all the specific natural or human-made objects or effects you can think of. This list becomes your Identification Candidate list.

For each candidate on your Identification Candidate list, give your reasoning as to why the candidate is or is not the solution to your case. You may end up with a candidate that actually fits the evidence you have developed as you researched your case. You have then made a positive identification that fits in the IFO disposition category. (This can be even more satisfying than if you have concluded that your case fits best in the Unknown disposition). If you end up eliminating all your identification candidates, then you can claim that the solution to your case best fits into the Unknown disposition category.

So, how do you know you've got enough evidence for a positive identification, or enough for an Unknown disposition? This leads to ideas about what proof is.

Ideas About Proof

What constitutes proof of something? It depends on what that something is. You are lucky if the thing you want to prove is a logical or mathematical thing, such as a theorem. The laws of correct reasoning are well understood and well known in this realm. Logicians and mathematicians deal in proofs all the time and, except at the philosophical edge in discussions of the foundations of logic and mathematics, proofs are a relatively straightforward thing. Proof in this realm goes well beyond a reasonable doubt. Proof establishes certainty here.

But we are not so lucky in the world of empirical science. This is where rocks, plants, planets, steel, magnetic fields, people, laser beams, etc., dwell. Scientists have developed elaborate but still pretty well understood methodologies of proof here. A basic concept is the notion of a scientific experiment that leads to proof that a new effect or circumstance is real after replication of the experiment and its results by independent scientists. In ufology, we use the knowledge developed by scientists about the world to help us reason about what is plausible and what is not in our case research. But we are not scientists in our investigative jobs. Here again, as in logic and mathematics, proof in the scientific realm goes well beyond a reasonable doubt. But it is less strong than in the logic and mathematics realm.

UFO Investigation Like Forensic Science

If we are not scientific investigators, what are we? What are our investigative methods most like? UFO investigators are like police detectives and accident investigators. So, our research and concepts of proof are most like what happens in forensic science, which is the application of both scientific and scholarly principles to develop facts about a specific occurrence at a certain time and place so that the facts may be used in a legal system to prove a case. We don't have a legal system where our facts are put to the test of persuasion, but you could substitute the idea of winning a formal debate, perhaps. Forensic proof for a legal system is less certain than logical/mathematical or scientific proof. But it is still a powerful kind of proof.

Standards of Proof

The standards of proof in a legal system are "preponderance of the evidence," "clear and convincing evidence," and "proof beyond a reasonable doubt." The first standard is used to win cases in civil disputes and the second and third standards are used in civil and criminal cases.

Our best cases develop evidence that reaches the level of certainty of

- *Beyond a reasonable doubt,*
- But usually we only reach *clear and convincing evidence*
- Or only *preponderance of the evidence.*

Very occasionally, if a UFO case actually yields physical evidence that can be tested in scientific laboratories, then there might be *proof beyond a scientific doubt*. But this hardly ever exists in UFO cases.

Beyond a Reasonable Doubt

What does "beyond a reasonable doubt" mean for UFO cases? It means that a person who is reasonably knowledgeable about the world, say a person who has taken undergraduate courses in science and the humanities in college, is fully satisfied or entirely convinced of your case disposition decision after they have read your UFO report. This does **not** mean absolute certainty or 100% convinced. If we apply a percentage of conviction to this legal phrase, it might be 95% up to 100% convinced. The middle level certainty of *clear and convincing evidence* is perhaps 70 to 95% convinced.

Preponderance of the Evidence

Preponderance of the evidence is simply the idea that the balance of evidence tips in one direction or the other. In other words, it might be as weak as 51% convinced or much stronger at 60% or 70%, or so. Remember that in civil legal cases, proof at the level of preponderance of the evidence is sufficient to award money in damages to the winning party.

Standards of Proof and Confidence Levels

To make it simple, let's agree on the following definitions for Oregon MUFON UFO investigation:

- *Beyond a reasonable doubt* means that you have a *very high* level of confidence that your choice of a disposition is correct.
- *Clear and convincing evidence* means that you have a *medium* level of confidence that your choice of a disposition is correct.
- *Preponderance of the evidence* means that you have a *low* level of confidence that your choice of a disposition is correct.

Oregon MUFON's Disposition Decision Process

With these ideas about proof in mind, consider this process for sufficiently good disposition decisions.

1. As you go through your case and gather and evaluate evidence, make a list of what the UFO stimulus could be in terms of human-made objects or effects and/or natural phenomena. Be as creative as you can and don't hesitate to ask your fellow investigators to suggest other human-made objects or effects and/or natural phenomena for your Identification Candidates list.
2. When you've got all the evidence it seems reasonable and feasible to gather for your case, go through each candidate on your list and do your best to decide what level of proof the evidence rises up to. Do the facts add up to at least preponderance of the evidence—at least 51% so the proof scale tips to the candidate? Always be aware that, ideally however, your certainty should be around the level of 85% to 95% confidence that you have made the right identification. That is, the evidence should be clear and convincing to you that you have made the right decision about your UFO stimulus. Remember you want to make the right decision for the person who reported this UFO.
3. If you go through all your identification candidates and eliminate them all, then you are left with the default disposition category of Unknown and you should conclude your case with that disposition category.

Sometimes, the evidence clearly points to Unknown because, for example, people described entities running around or more than one or two "impossible" maneuvers for a natural or human-made object or phenomenon. But many times you are left with a relatively weak preponderance of the evidence in favor of the *Unknown* disposition category. But by using this process, you'll know you have done your best and you can close the case. Remember that you can always re-open a case if additional evidence or thinking on your part inclines you to change your disposition category decision—whether it is Unknown, IFO, or Hoax.

Even if you follow the basic procedure above, you may have made the wrong decision in an ideal world where all truth and falsity are known with certainty, but we don't live in that ideal world. You will know, however, that you made a good faith effort to identify the stimulus of your case.

Oregon MUFON only requires that you use the preponderance of the evidence standard in making identifications in the IFO disposition category. However, we strongly urge you to be more certain of your decision than just 51% confident. We would like you to rise to the level of clear and convincing evidence (85% or more). We want you to win your case in the "court of UFO case decisions."

Examples of Disposition Write-Ups

Here is some example wording for your disposition write-ups:

- “Since the identification candidates do NOT all fail in this case for the reasons stated, these UFO observations are classified as probable identified human-made objects, specifically, ordinary plastic, light-weight shopping bags. I believe that the overall evidence in this case rises to the level of between preponderance of the evidence and clear and convincing evidence, that is, around 70% or so convinced, which makes this case reasonably strong.”
- “Based on the witness CMS description only and the lack of a promised 15 minute video to examine, I have reluctantly concluded that this is a MUFON Unknown - UAV to only a certainty of preponderance of the evidence. This could change if I ever get the promised video.”
- “Based on the witness description, CMS checkoff information, and the drawing of the witness, I have concluded that this is a MUFON Unknown - Other with low confidence of being correct.”

Guidelines for Doing Investigations

These general guidelines were contributed by State Director Tom Bowden in June 2014.

Keep these guidelines in mind as you go through your case investigations and your write-ups should go more smoothly.

- Keep an eye on the 90 day window that MUFON HQ wants us to observe in completing our cases. This 90 days starts when the case is reported to MUFON. So, take that date and move forward three months (90 days). That is your “due date” for each case you work on. We don’t get full “credit” for cases that run over 90 days before they are marked “completed” by you. You can still work on them, but they count less in the state-by-state standings evaluation list sent monthly to your State Director.
- With the 90 day window in mind, give preference to your older cases that are coming due.
- If in your initial evaluation of a case, you see that you can complete it quickly, then do it and get it out of your cases-to-investigate list.
- On Category 1 cases, don’t do more documentation than you need to, to properly work the case. A separate report document is not required on Category 1 cases, so only use the separate report document only if it helps you work the case.
- Remember to complete the BGE (Ballester-Guasp Report Evaluator form).
- Rather than list the entire range of possible explanations in your case write-up, just discuss those that seem remotely possible given the details reported by the witness and all the contributing factors.
- On non-responsive cases (that is, the witness hasn’t initially responded), think about whether you can make a decision without witness contact. If you feel comfortable with your disposition decision, then complete the case and close it. However, if you really believe that you need witness contact, try again by both email and phone, and set a reminder to follow up in three to four days. If you have been unsuccessful after three contact attempts, feel free to use the Insufficient Data disposition if appropriate.
- For historic cases (for example, old abduction stories), Information Only is a good choice of disposition, especially if the date of the occurrence is approximate and an interview is unlikely to uncover new useful information.

If you as an FI can think of other useful tips to help FIs complete cases quicker and yet still do a good job, we want to hear about them. Let your State Director or Assistant State Director know!

Using Occam’s Razor

Occam’s Razor is a metaphysical (philosophical) rule of reasoning that states that the simplest hypothesis is to be preferred among competing hypotheses. Here your case disposition alternatives (Unknown, IFO,

and Hoax) are the hypotheses. You are trying to find the best fit for these competing hypotheses. Was the stimulus for the report some kind of IFO or hoax, or does it go into the Unknown disposition category because the various IFO identification candidates just don't fit the evidence?

Using Occam's Razor in this decision process says that you should prefer the simplest hypothesis. But what does "simplest" mean here? People who are ignorant of the mass of UFO sighting descriptions patiently compiled over the last 65 years (see Richard Hall's two *The UFO Evidence* books for an introduction) usually say that any *possible* natural or human-made object or phenomenon identification candidate is *greatly* to be preferred. But they only say this because of ignorance of the sighting data. You as a UFO investigator have read through this evidence so you know that the Unknown disposition category is a definite hypothesis that could very well fit the evidence you have gathered in your quest to find out what the actual UFO report stimulus was. So, Unknown, IFO, and Hoax are all on an equal footing for you, and Occam's Razor is not violated when you find that Unknown is the best fit for all your evidence.

Extreme skeptics, debunkers, and those ignorant of the UFO sighting literature tend to think that identifying a UFO sighting stimulus as an Unknown violates Occam's Razor because they usually think that "the 'UFO people' just can't be coming from so far out in outer space." But you know, which they usually don't, that the ETI hypothesis is only one idea of the origin of UFOs. There are many others that involve possible realms where distance is not a factor. (And even if UFOs originate with "ordinary" ET beings, it would not be illogical to presume that vast distances in space may not be the seemingly insurmountable obstacle that it seems to be to us because presumably their knowledge of physics and the physical universe is greatly advanced compared to ours just judging from the idea that they are appearing on Earth.)

Also, the sheer number of UFO sightings is not a source of unlikeliness either because of the possibility of other origins for UFOs than outer space. Even though it is true that there is no scientific proof of the existence of the many other realms that UFOs could be originating from, there is plenty of scholarly evidence that at least one other realm does indeed exist that could be the origin of the UFO phenomenon. See the OM website *Books* link under the *Resources* heading for books about the evidence for thinking that another realm (the "transpersonal" world), mostly hidden, does indeed exist.

WRITING THE CASE REPORT

When you sit down to write up your case report, make sure that at least 95% of your research and investigation are done. You need that perspective, of course.

Important: For an example and guidelines about the minimum kind of case report that MUFON requires, see APPENDIX E: PROPER CMS INVESTIGATIVE REPORT FORMAT. Note also that MUFON as of 2014 does not require that you complete Category 1 cases in the CMS Investigative Report Format. It is perfectly sufficient to write up a report in the "Investigation Report" textbox in the CMS case report form.

Important: In your formal Oregon MUFON reports, always put aliases (pseudonyms) for all witness names. We can then put the reports up on the Internet freely on the Oregon MUFON website and protect the identities of witnesses. No personally identifiable information about witnesses should appear in your final case study reports. When it goes on the Internet, it becomes literally available to the world. *This alias (pseudonym) requirement holds true also for people who do not check the "Anonymous" check box on their CMS report.*

Important: In your Oregon MUFON reports, always "source" any illustration or photo from the Internet. Right under the illustration or photo, you should put a little tag line that says, for example, "Source: Google Maps" or "Source: NUFORC" or "Source: ABC News". Also, if you obtain a substantial amount of data from any source on the Internet or otherwise, give credit somewhere in your report. All illustrations and photos are automatically copyrighted to their creators and must be properly credited or "sourced."

Think about the following before and during your case report write-up:

- Consider whether you need to write up much of a case report at all. If the case is not particularly interesting to you, if it doesn't have much evidence, if it is almost certainly an IFO or hoax, or if the case cannot be pursued regardless of its potential (witnesses don't respond), then consider *not* writing a case report at all. In this case, it is perfectly sufficient to write up your work on the case and your conclusion in a simple text editor and then copy the text directly to the investigation report text box at the bottom of a CMS report online at *mufon.com*. (Be sure to put your report in a file and keep a copy for yourself in the "Report" directory for the case on your PC or Mac.)
- If you decide there is enough evidence and interest on your part to commit to writing up an "Oregon MUFON Case Study" report, then be sure to use one of the completed cases on *oregonmufon.com* to give you the format. Don't re-invent the wheel. Copy, copy, copy.

Your case report may only be a few pages. This is fine. But if it is 50 pages, that is fine, too! Just get the facts accurate, do your best reasoning about the facts, and draw your conclusions. If a case turns out to be a hoax or IFO and you want to document that in a case report, please go right ahead. These are very valuable, too.

- Make sure your large case reports include the following:
 - (1) *A title page*. Put the title you've given your case, your name, date published, and a tabular summary of the case here.
 - (2) *A table of contents*. Consider a table of figures and table of tables, too, if you have a lot of them. Your report is a technical report, so make it have the format and apparatus of a technical report. But write it to be easily understandable, please! If appropriate, put in appendices of typed up witness interviews, extra research information you've developed, other technical information, graphs of data, drawings you've done to clarify facts, etc.
 - (3) *An introduction ("Introduction")*. Include background information, summary information, and anything else that will "set the scene" for the reader.
 - (4) *A sighting narrative ("Sighting Description" or "Sighting Narrative")*. Consider a table showing an event chronology along with the sighting reconstruction narrative which you've put together in your investigation.
 - (5) *A discussion of the environment ("Environment")*. The place and the weather and other pertinent environmental facts (perhaps the sighting occurred at a special place like a rock concert or fair or sporting event) go here. All UFO events happen in an environment. Give the reader a general idea of what the environment is.
 - (6) *A discussion of the evidence ("Evidence")*. Make explicit what the evidence is: witness testimony, photos, videotapes, happenstances of physical occurrences in the environment (that you may be able to verify or even do "experiments" on), environmental facts like what the neighborhood is like, what wunderground.com says the weather was (cloud deck heights, wind speeds, etc.), and so on. Be honest about how good the evidence is. Make it clear where you are "guestimating" things, which, unfortunately, we have to do a lot with UFO events.
 - (7) *An analysis of the evidence ("Analysis")*. Sometimes we can get good concurrent witness measurements (rare) of the UFO or of circumstances in the environment. But most of the time we have to make after-the-fact measurements of what we can. With these measurements, we might be able to do a little simple math to get probable UFO size, UFO speed, UFO altitude, or other characteristics of the UFO. Get creative with the evidence and see how much an honest analysis might yield. You might be surprised if you put in a little creative thinking here. The SD, ASD, and other Oregon MUFON investigators might be able to help you with analysis if your math, chemistry, or physics is a little weak. Seek help!
 - (8) *Your conclusions ("Conclusion")*. A good tactic to arrive at a reasonable conclusion about your case report information is to look at all the evidence you've gathered and make an educated guess about what the best candidate for an IFO might be. Then assume your UFO is an IFO with that identity, for example, a bunch of party balloons released into the air or an ultralight with some specially affixed bright lights shining down, and then figure out what the

characteristics of that IFO must have been under the viewing circumstances. If the hypothesized IFO's characteristics are too different from your evidential facts, then you've probably got a true MUFON "Unknown."

Not very many of your cases will warrant more than a couple of pages of a formal "Oregon MUFON Case Study" report. In a year's time, you may get a few, however, that you'll want to write up in a nicely thorough report of a goodly number of pages.

EXAMPLE INVESTIGATIONS

For examples of completed case reports and for ideas about what kinds of things you might do and think about to identify a UFO report object or phenomenon, see the case reports online at *oregonmufon.com*. They are put up there as PDF files. More and more case reports will be put online as time goes by. Take a look at them all. Soon we may be putting up some of your handiwork for all the world to see, so make it good!

THE LAST WORD

Remember that we want to be professionals when we investigate cases. We are engaged in this "profession" because we are curious about UFOs and because we want to help witnesses and the public understand a little more about UFOs.

We also want to add our own two cents to the research "knowledgebase" that investigators and researchers before us have developed. We owe a tremendous debt of gratitude to researchers of the past such as Ivan Sanderson, J. Allen Hynek, Donald Keyhoe, Richard Hall, Charles Bowen, Paul Hill, Coral Lorenzen, Jim Lorenzen, James McDonald, John Mack, Cynthia Hind, Isabel Davis, Paris Flammonde, John Fuller, Betty Hill, Morris Jessup, B. Ann Slate, James McCampbell, Leonard Stringfield, Harold Wilkins, Karla Turner, Budd Hopkins, Roger Leir, Terry Hansen, et al.

Current day researchers of note are William Moore, Kevin Randle, John Scheussler, Walter Webb, Richard Dolan, David Jacobs, Stanton Friedman, Richard Haines, Eddie Bullard, Jerome Clark, Timothy Good, Jacques Vallee, Peter Sturrock, Barry Greenwood, Bruce Maccabee, Jenny Randles, David Saunders, Kenneth Ring, Bill Chalker, Ann Druffel, Raymond Fowler, Linda Howe, Colin Andrews, et al.

If you don't know some of these people, visit *oregonmufon.com* and get references to their books and get to studying. When you show up at a UFO witness's door, you are the expert in their eyes. The more accurate information and reliable knowledge you have about UFOs, the better off you and the witness will be. Sadly, the public has been kept in the dark about UFOs when it comes to the really serious information. You are a source of that for the public you come into contact with.

We are very happy to have you with Oregon MUFON and good luck to you in your UFO investigation career!

APPENDIX A: EXAMPLE OF CASE OUTLINE

The following is an example from an Oregon MUFON case. We highly recommend that you create a summary in outline form for all your cases. You might be surprised how easily you forget details, especially when you are working on multiple cases. If you have one outline file with all the pertinent data about all your cases in one place, it will be a lot easier for you to keep track of them all. Note the "Next Action" item. This will let you know what to do next on the case. Again, this is especially useful if you have multiple cases you are working on. The "Case #1" is there because you may occasionally have multiple cases for one person!

▼ Bonham, Tom

▼ Case #1 "North Plains Glowing UFOs"

- **Last updated:** 3-21-07.
- **Origination:** CMS.
- **MUFON CMS Status:** Assigned.
- **Next Action:** Waiting for contact from Tom's parents.
- **Preliminary Evaluation:** Probable UFO.
- **Final Evaluation:** Pending.
- **Date:** 3/17/2007
- **Time:** 5:30 PM PST.
- **Place:** North Plains, Oregon, on farm.
- **Duration:** About 10 minutes.
- **Evidence:** 12 digital photos of the UFO (UFOs?).
- **Other Witnesses:** None.
- **Case Type:** Daylight Disc (DD).
- **Summary:** The witness was doing farm chores when he noticed an odd, helicopter-like sound. He looked up in the sky and saw a fuzzy, glowing, orangish, ovoid object. He ran to get his digital camera and began taking photos. He lost the object in the distance.
- **Important Characteristics:** Low-level daylight sighting of glowing ovoid UFO with photos.
- **Communications:** CMS report only so far.
- **Notes:** None.

APPENDIX B: OREGON MUFON POLICY STATEMENTS

Oregon MUFON policy statements are documented below. It is expected that all Oregon MUFON members, Field Investigators, Section Directors, Assistant State Directors, and State Directors read, understand, and adhere to all the policy statements in this manual. These policy statements exist so that Oregon MUFON can better serve UFO witnesses, UFO researchers, and all other members of MUFON, Inc.

All Oregon MUFON members are expected to adhere to all policies promulgated by Oregon MUFON and MUFON, Inc. The State Director and Assistant State Director shall make diligent effort to inform all Oregon MUFON members of the important policy statements issuing from MUFON, Inc. The primary policies for conduct for Oregon MUFON members apply to Oregon MUFON Field Investigators in the conduct of their field investigation duties. The ethics rules for this are found in the *MUFON Field Investigator's Manual* and this *Oregon MUFON Investigator's Guide*.

New Field Investigator Training

It is imperative that new Field Investigator trainees start out on the right foot in their careers as Field Investigators. To that end, the State Director and Assistant State Director of Oregon MUFON shall ensure that all new Field Investigator trainees:

1. Receive a current copy of the *Oregon MUFON Investigator's Guide*.
2. Are directed to the Oregon MUFON website at URL oregonmufon.com.
3. Are sent an introductory email for new Field Investigator trainees welcoming them to the Oregon MUFON investigator.
4. Are invited to an Oregon MUFON team meeting within three months of becoming an Oregon MUFON Field Investigator trainee.
5. Are mentored by at least one trained Oregon MUFON Field Investigator. This shall include having the new trainee accompany an Oregon MUFON Field Investigator on at least two field visits when appropriate. This shall include the mentor reading over and approving of any reports generated out of a UFO case investigation by a new trainee.

Conduct of Oregon MUFON Meetings

Oregon MUFON meetings are intended to educate the public along with Oregon MUFON members and Field Investigators and others interested in the topic of UFOs and allied subjects. As such, Oregon MUFON will adhere to the following guidelines when conducting meetings.

1. All Oregon MUFON meetings are open to the public as long as a person's conduct does not go beyond generally accepted behavior at public meetings. The State Director and Assistant State Director reserve the right to deny meeting privileges to any member of the public deemed by them to have transgressed the bounds of generally accepted behavior at public meetings.
2. The State Director (or the Assistant State Director) will publish via email a general email agenda for each monthly meeting open to the public.
3. The State Director shall hold an Oregon MUFON Investigative Team meeting four times a year (or as convenient for the State Director in consultation with the team members). Members of the public are not invited except upon special invitation.

APPENDIX C: EXAMPLE OF IDENTIFICATION CANDIDATES WRITE-UP

The following is an example from an Oregon MUFON Case Study report. When you go to the trouble of writing up a full OM Case Study report, include in your Conclusion section a discussion of your identification candidates and why they do or don't constitute an identification. When you just fill out the CMS "investigation report" text box, however, you don't need to be as formal. But you do need to clearly state why you think an IFO disposition actually fits the evidence for a specific natural or human-made object or phenomenon. See *Making the Case Disposition Decision* earlier in this *Guide*.

Example of Identification Candidates Write-up

Identification Candidates

The candidates for identification for this slow-moving train of reddish orange lights are the following:

- **Aircraft.** No conventional aircraft, military or civilian, fits the witness' descriptions. Neither talked about any kind of sound associated with the UFO display—even Jane who was much closer. Also, there were too many of the UFOs to be airplanes. *Thus, this identification candidate is rejected.*
- **Helicopter.** This candidate is no different from aircraft. *Thus, this identification candidate is rejected.*
- **Ultralight.** Prominently lighted ultralights might possibly be an identification, but no noise was noted, they don't really look like the simple orb shape that was observed, and there were too many. Also, this hobby craft being operated at night over a major metropolitan area would constitute a danger to the public and is probably illegal. *Thus, this identification candidate is rejected.*
- **Remote-controlled model aircraft.** Specially lighted RC models would be somewhat similar to ultralights, though possibly more plausible. But they would be a public hazard and there were too many observed for this to be plausible. *Thus, this identification candidate is rejected.*
- **Glowing Balloons.** These do exist and could be the true identity of the UFOs, but they are far rarer than Chinese sky lanterns. *Thus, this identification candidate is rejected.*
- **Chinese Sky Lanterns.** Bingo! This fits at least 95% of everything Joe and Jane said about their UFO display. *Thus, this identification candidate is **accepted**.*

Since the identification candidate of Chinese sky lanterns fits virtually all the observed and described characteristics, this UFO is classified as an IFO at a very high level of confidence.

APPENDIX D: EXAMPLE OF FIRST EMAIL CONTACT

The following is an example of a first email or letter communication with a new UFO case witness. We want to set the basic tone of professionalism and openness to communication. We identify ourselves and what our purpose is. We are the ones who determine whether the witness has seen a UFO to the best of our abilities. Before we do our investigation, the UFO witness's description is just a story. After we do our investigation and determine what disposition (UFO, IFO, Hoax, Insufficient Data) the story should be in, the story then becomes an investigated case.

Feel free to "wordsmith" the example to fit your style while maintaining a tone of professionalism and open communication. See also *Making the Initial Contact* under *Typical Investigation Scenario* above.

Example of First Communication Email (or Letter)

Dear *John Doe* [or *Jane Doe*], *[[[Use the full name as given on the CMS report.]]]]*

Thank you for reporting your sighting to the Mutual UFO Network (MUFON). I am a field investigator assigned to follow up on your report. At MUFON, we attempt to investigate each report to determine if there may be a conventional explanation. However, if no reasonable explanation can be found, then we document the report as a sighting of an unknown object or phenomenon.

[[[Say something here that personalizes your email such as a particularly intriguing detail from their CMS report that you'd genuinely like to know more about. Make sure that they know this is not a form letter.]]]]

I am asking for your cooperation in the investigative process. Because facts, perceptions, and details from a witness make up nearly all of the available information in most reports, we ask questions to get as much information as we reasonably can.

After we have worked together to clarify the information, facts, details, etc., about your report, I will be happy to answer general questions about UFOs and about your particular report. Another part of MUFON's mission is to provide information to the public about UFOs. Please feel free to ask me questions about UFOs if you like. Oregon MUFON has developed a website specifically to provide detailed information about UFOs in Oregon along with general information that will help you understand UFOs and similar phenomena. And, of course, mufon.com where you reported your sighting also has plenty of good information.

Sincerely yours,

[Your name]

Oregon MUFON Field Investigator

[your phone number]

oregonmufon.com

APPENDIX E: PROPER CMS INVESTIGATIVE REPORT FORMAT

The following is the proper format for an online report for the CMS system. This is the format that MUFON HQ expects to see for every report that we do. It goes in the text entry box under the Field Investigator Report section of the individual CMS reports that witnesses make in the CMS UFO reporting database. You must include all the headings shown in bold below. Information about what is expected under each heading is provided. You should do your best to fill them all out. A filled out example report follows the explanations.

CMS Report Section/Heading Explanations

INVESTIGATION LOG: *This section should include the contact activity and any relevant information or activities conducted during the case investigation.*

FINAL REPORT DATE: *Date of filing the report.*

Field Investigator ID#: *Your official MUFON Field Investigator identification number.*

CASE #: *The case number from the CMS report.*

BGE Results: *Total Certainty Index is “##%” . The BGE result from the calculation in the BGE tab at the top of the CMS witness report.*

LONGITUDE/LATITUDE: (+26.345140,-082.510215) *Suggested Sources: HYPERLINK "http://itouchmap.com/latlong.html" http://itouchmap.com/latlong.html) or Google Earth: HYPERLINK "http://www.google.com/earth/index.html" http://www.google.com/earth/index.html.*

SYNOPSIS: *Quick description of the sighting based on the submitted information and interview. A summary of the facts out of the witness report. (Who, what, where, when, other pertinent details.)*

OBJECT DESCRIPTION: *Describe the size and distance, first seen, last seen and flight/movement characteristics duration of the sighting. Provide reference to witness or artist renditions, if feasible. If an illustration is provided please attach to the report. Also include info marked in the boxes.*

WITNESS INTERVIEWS/STATEMENTS: *Whether the interview was conducted by phone, email or in person, describe the process and provide any additional items beyond the initial reported details. Any contacts with other sources (such as FAA, media, police, can be placed in this section.)*

NATURAL PHENOMENON OR MAN MADE: *Please describe any possibilities of man made objects or natural phenomena. Conducting database checks are necessary in determining what may be in the sky during the event. This is extremely helpful to the field Investigator by utilizing the process of elimination, an important aspect of the Scientific Method. We are looking for database checks that involve: celestial, satellite, comets, meteor showers, aircraft trackers, etc. Local media checks of news agencies can also be written in this section.*

Sources:

HYPERLINK "http://www.stellarium.org/" http://www.stellarium.org/ , HYPERLINK "http://stardate.org/" http://stardate.org/ , HYPERLINK "http://neave.com/planetarium/" http://neave.com/planetarium/ , HYPERLINK "https://www.notams.faa.gov/dinsQueryWeb/" https://www.notams.faa.gov/dinsQueryWeb/ , HYPERLINK "http://spaceweather.com/flybys/" http://spaceweather.com/flybys/ , HYPERLINK "http://spaceweather.com/" http://spaceweather.com/ , HYPERLINK "http://www.heavens-above.com/" www.heavens-above.com , HYPERLINK "http://www.obliquity.com/skyeye/misc/meteor.html" http://www.obliquity.com/skyeye/misc/meteor.html , HYPERLINK "http://hubblesite.org/explore_astronomy/tonights_sky/" http://hubblesite.org/explore_astronomy/tonights_sky/

WEATHER INFORMATION: *Very important. If date and time are available please enter in the appropriate field on the report form. (Source: HYPERLINK "http://www.wunderground.com/" www.wunderground.com).*

LOCATION: *Check with Google Maps and note the terrain, landscape and any landmarks (such as tracks, power-lines, etc).*

EVIDENCE/INVESTIGATION: *In this section please describe the evidence, the evaluation of the evidence and the disposition of the evidence in relation to the case. This can be performed by the assigned field Investigator, or a*

chapter expert representative or an advisor on the HQ staff. Evidence can include photos, videos, trace evidence, documents, physical and other. The processing of evidence in category 3 cases can be conducted either through the STAR Team or MUFON HQ (depending on the situation). This section will be key in the determination of the case disposition. Using this process is what puts the science in our investigations.

WITNESS CREDIBILITY: Refer to the observed behaviors, professional background, education and the quality of any interview that may be conducted.

CORRELATING CASES: Please list existing cases which might be related to the sighting you are investigating. It is recommended to check the MUFON database at a minimum for correlating cases. Other reporting databases can also be referenced. A trend may emerge which will assist in determining the research value of the case. This section is not required but can be useful for future research.

CONCLUSIONS: Please give the case disposition here and explain how you arrived to the conclusion in your investigation. Sometimes your information will be limited. Do your best with what you have to make an objective assessment. Your chapter officers can and will assist if other conclusion are recommended.

CMS Report Example

INVESTIGATION LOG: 6/17/12 - investigation results emailed to witness./mcm

FINAL REPORT DATE: 6/17/12

FI ID# 12211

CASE#: 37647

BGE Results: Total Certainty Index is 1.99%

LONGITUDE/LATITUDE: (+26.345140, -082.510215)

SYNOPSIS: RP reported that on 4/21/12 at approximately 2330 hours he looked up into the sky and observed a flash of light traveling in an erratic pattern. He witnessed the white star-like object travel across the sky from the Southwest to the Northeast.

OBJECT DESCRIPTION: According to the boxes marked above, the object is described as white and star-like, with a reflective and glowing surface. The object was also noted to have turned abruptly, changing direction and blinking as it traveled. The object was observed to be approximately 85° off the horizon, first being noticed out of the Southwest and traveling to the Northeast.

INTERVIEW/STATEMENTS: None conducted.

NATURAL/MANMADE PHENOMENON: A review of the satellite database revealed that the Envisat was visible over Belfair. Data details: 2225-SE/2226-ENE/2232-N. The highest point was at 69°. Jupiter and Venus in the sky earlier in the evening.

WEATHER INFORMATION: The temperature in Belfair, WA, was 32 degrees, winds out of the NNE at 6.9 mph and clear.

LOCATION: Google Map shows that Belfair is a very small town on the Western Peninsula near Bremerton. Surrounded by mountains, trees and little else. Nothing remarkable was noted.

EVIDENCE/INVESTIGATION: After reviewing the witness summary and conducting the database checks, it is determined that what the witness viewed was most likely the Envisat satellite. However, while the RP states his time of observation was 2325, and the HA database shows that the satellite was overhead exactly one hour prior, I am inclined to conclude that the witness made an error in the time. No other satellites were seen in the sky overhead either before or after this event. The planets were already out of the area by the time of the event, and they also would not account for the behavior observed, which is indeed consistent with the behavior of a satellite.

WITNESS CREDIBILITY: RP notes in his narrative that he is a trained observer and has a college degree.

CORRELATING CASES: No check conducted.

CONCLUSION: Based on the witness summary and the subsequent database checks, I have concluded that this object is an IFO - Manmade (Envisat Satellite). THIS CASE IS CLOSED./mcm

APPENDIX F: OREGON MUFON ID CANDIDATES LIST

Table 3, *Oregon MUFON Identification Candidates List* explains the types of categories that IDs fit into. Note that the list is organized from the top down by “Very Common,” “Common,” “Not Common,” and “Rare” according to Oregon MUFON’s experience. Most ID’s are in the “Not Common” category, and only seven are in the “Very Common” and “Common” categories. Even though the “Very Common” and “Common” categories account for most of the IFOs for Oregon MUFON’s identified cases, the “Not Common” and “Rare” categories number more than 20. Some “Not Common” and “Rare” IDs have not been used in ten years at Oregon MUFON.

The thing to remember is that the world is complex and some IDs might actually be used only once for one particular case! Because of this complexity in UFO identification practice, it is very likely that some cases we call UFOs are actually more complicated and rare cases of identifiable phenomena if only we had enough information! (Of course, debunkers and extreme skeptics say this is true of *all* UFO reports, but they are irrational to a fault. It’s OK to be a little bit irrational sometimes — we all are, but to carry irrationality to such great lengths as debunkers and extreme skeptics do is . . . well, irrational! Debunkers and extreme skeptics are just sophists in the modern sense of that word.)

Table 3. Oregon MUFON Identification Candidates List

ID Candidate	Characteristics
Stars	Stars appear at dusk, dawn, and night. They can be any rainbow color and twinkling; white, blue, red are most common. They move across the sky in an arc around the north polar star (Polaris). They move slowly, 15 degrees of arc an hour (about a fist and a half at arm's length). Some stars are prominent: Sirius, Vega, Capella, Arcturus, and a few others. Note that stars can appear to make small movements (due to autokinesis — small involuntary eye movement when staring at an object). They've also been described to make back and forth or up and down movements, which, of course, they do not do. According to Hendry, stars and planets make up about a third of Nocturnal Light IFOs. Very common.
Planets	Venus is the champion of the easily visible planets: Venus, Mars, Jupiter, and Saturn. These planets follow the ecliptic (the path of the sun through the sky) and rise in the east and set in the west. They move slowly but not exactly like the stars; planets even "double back" sometimes (retrograde motion for small distances). Venus can be 100 times as bright (whitish) as prominent stars and is quite easily seen in the morning and evening at times. It can even be seen in the daytime at its brightest in some years. Mars can get quite prominent and bright (red) in certain years. In high-powered binoculars, these planets are seen as small disks unlike stars. According to Hendry, stars and planets make up about a third of Night Light IFOs. Very common.
Satellites	Satellites appear usually like fast moving stars. Sometimes they can be fairly bright, however. They can appear in any part of the night sky and move continuously and disappear suddenly. (They may go in and out of the Earth's shadow as they orbit the Earth.) They don't have large erratic movements, however; their motion is smooth and continuous. They may appear to brighten and dim as they move along as they turn different sides to the sun illuminating them. Common.

ID Candidate	Characteristics
Commercial Aircraft	<p>Aircraft are many and varied. They can be seen night and day. Running lights at night on many aircraft are red and green wing tip lights with a white or red light on the tail. (Bigger aircraft like airliners may not have the red and green wing tip lights.) Usually one or more periodic (one second) flashing light(s) are present on larger airplanes. Whitish landing lights are switched on near runways. These can be very bright, looking head on at them. Unfortunately, for identification purposes, the variety of lights on aircraft is large. Military aircraft can have very unusual lights in unusual places.</p> <p>Aircraft can be covered by your thumb at the end of your outstretched arm, even if they fly very low over you. You must be close to an airport for flying aircraft to be very large (bigger than your thumb at arm's length). Most aircraft are not visible in the sky for over a couple of minutes at most because they are traveling from here to there and you usually see them along their flight path. But sometimes aircraft do circle or otherwise pass through your view of the sky such as crop duster aircraft do. Common.</p>
Helicopters	<p>Helicopters are usually loud and unmistakable because of this within a couple of thousand feet of you. Their running lights are generally white and red and may be located on the tail and bottom. Their movements can be in any direction and change fairly quickly and include times of hovering in place. Police surveillance helicopters are seen over urban areas. These are usually small to medium in size and can be white or dark. Military and industry helicopters of large and small varieties are occasionally seen over rural areas. Military and police may operate at night, but most helicopter activity is in the daytime. Occasionally, Coast Guard rescue helicopters are seen flying up and down the seacoast. Common.</p>
Sky Lanterns	<p>These are a recent phenomenon, popular in the last 20 years. They are usually paper lantern-shaped objects of various colors and shapes that rise into the air when their heat source (an open flame) is lit and the air within expands and becomes lighter than the surrounding air. Their behavior is balloon-like. They rise slowly and move along at relatively low altitudes with the prevailing winds. Many people light a number of sky lanterns at the same time or one after the other, so a group can float by the unaware viewer. They can be spotted first rising up from behind ground based objects like trees and houses, or, of course, can be seen first already higher in the sky. They are commonly reddish or orangish from the flame inside them at the bottom of the object. Common.</p>
Photo Effects and Artifacts	<p>Digital photo effects and artifacts are many and varied. Their analysis is best left to the most photographically knowledgeable investigator on your team. Basically, only the overall shape, color, and tonal variation can be reliably discerned in digital photos if the "UFO" image of interest is less than around 20 by 15 pixels in size. Details within the basic boundaries of the "UFO" image can only be known reasonably well if image sizes are above around 25 by 25 pixels in size and larger. It is very tempting to believe that you can discern significant variations in a "UFO" images that are too small. You can see "exhaust ducts," "canopies," "seams," "tail projections," etc. This delusion is somewhat similar to pareidolia, which is seeing patterns in random data such as faces in the clouds.</p> <p>You must know your digital image analysis software well enough to make sure you are seeing and judging the actual pixels in the original image as the photo came from the camera with the least amount of processing possible. Modern digital cameras do a lot of processing electronically at the sensor itself and in the in-camera firmware after image acquisition. You can't do anything to alter that. You can try to educate yourself about this, however. However, you must make sure that you get copies of JPGs, TIFFs, or camera raw images with no further manipulations of any kind by the photographer/witness.</p> <p>You should know all the ins and outs of the EXIF data that accompanies every JPG and TIFF format photos. Common.</p>

ID Candidate	Characteristics
<p>Meteors, Space Debris, Reentries</p>	<p>Meteors can streak through our sky in daytime or night time. They can be just a bright streak of green, orange, or white, or they can be much closer (rarely) with obvious rumbling, hissing, or other noise with a cloudy, smoky trail. You might even smell them if they are extremely close! Most meteors are very small little streaks in the night time usually originating at a "radiant" point within certain constellations such as the Perseids and Leonids meteor showers. Space debris is somewhat similar, but a particularly prominent piece of space debris coming back to Earth will be known and announced by NASA or other government agency sometimes. These phenomena don't last over two minutes (reentries) or 10 seconds (meteors). Not common.</p>
<p>Moon</p>	<p>The moon is usually quite recognizable except sometimes when it is pretty full on the horizon. Then it looks quite big and may be orangish and look like a "craft" behind some nearby trees or buildings. The moon is actually about one half a degree of the full 360 if you turn around in a circle pointing at the horizon. It looks quite big in the sky and in fact will, many times, be bigger than passing airplanes unless the airplanes are quite close to you. Surprisingly, you can cover the full moon with your thumb tip held at arm's length. Not common</p>
<p>Military Aircraft</p>	<p>Aircraft can be strange-looking to the average person sometimes. Secret, experimental government aircraft are virtually never flown low over populated areas. You might see (or hear) a very high flying (above 35,000 feet) secret craft if you live under their flight path. For example, the Los Angeles area between Area 51 and/or Palmdale/Lancaster/Edwards AFB and their Pacific Ocean MOA. It is very rare for high flying craft to zig zag or otherwise make erratic movements except for possible fighter jet simulated battles over Area 51, for example. According to Hendry, aircraft were about 20% of the total of Night Light UFOs. Not common.</p>
<p>Drones, RPVs</p>	<p>These human-made, aircraft-like, unpowered, technologically sophisticated devices will become increasingly evident in our skies as time goes on. Right now (2015), they are winged and un-winged, gasoline or electric powered, helicopter-like and/or airplane-like devices that are remotely piloted by people in a ground-based station not more than a few miles away for government and corporate devices and perhaps across the nation for military controlled devices. They generally don't have lots of lights on them, so they may be seen perhaps at night but won't "put on a show" like RC craft operated by hobbyists tend to do. They are operated at generally lower altitudes — perhaps 1000 feet to a couple of miles up — since surveillance of some type is generally the purpose of many drones. Still uncommon as of 2015, but this will change as our skies fill with these craft from military, government, and corporate sources. Not common.</p>
<p>Model Remote-controlled Crafts</p>	<p>Model airplanes, "quadcopters," "drones," etc. These devices for hobbyists are generally not much larger than four to five feet in length and are controlled remotely from the ground by the operator working craft controls on an electronic, handheld box. The operator keeps the RC craft in view at all times. The range is perhaps a couple thousand feet or so from the operator and not much more than 500 feet in altitude. Municipalities, states, and the FAA are now working on laws and rules to regulate this fast growing hobby.</p> <p>Some RC craft are even designed to look like "flying saucers" and many have nighttime visible LED lights that flash at regular and irregular intervals. They fly in swooping motions if they are airplane-like, but can hover and maneuver like helicopters if they are designed that way. You can generally hear them if they are closer than perhaps around 50 to 100 feet away, but the ambient sound level needs to be low.</p> <p>These hobbyist RC craft and the professional level drones and RPVs are an increasing concern for UFO investigators since they are a new source of IFOs that have a few of the visual and behavioral characteristics of genuine UFOs. Not common.</p>

ID Candidate	Characteristics
Other Balloons	<p>Other balloons are weather balloons, hot air balloons, tethered surveillance balloons (at the U.S. border), and various experimental balloons, etc. Weather balloons are launched daily at many meteorological installations around the U.S. They are six or so feet in diameter and opaque and carry a small instrument package aloft. They rise quickly in a few minutes and are then hard to see with the naked eye. They ride on the air currents to thousands of feet.</p> <p>Hot air balloons are readily seen and identified by most people on still days when they are generally launched. They are large in the sky at 50 to 100 or more feet in size and have a gondola at the bottom. They travel slowly and at low altitudes of 500 to 1000 feet or so. You can wave to the "martians" in the gondola if you are very near one of these, and they will wave back.</p> <p>The tethered surveillance balloons are in the states bordering Mexico and look like blimps with an oblong shape with protuberances. They stay in one place, but if you are driving along the freeway, they might seem unusual till you see them clearly.</p> <p>Various science and technology oriented installations may release balloons of various descriptions on occasion, but unless you are very close to one of these installations you will only see these types of balloons as possibly a high altitude speck in the sky comparable in size to Venus at the most. It would be a truly anomalous object that might be hard to identify and track down, though most operations launching these balloons are not part of secret government projects. Thus, you might get a positive ID. Not common.</p>
Kites	<p>Kites of today come in quite a variety of shapes, sizes, and colors. Their flight behavior would be a back and forth flight path or a stationary one. Kite enthusiasts congregate at beaches or parks sometimes. Not common.</p>
Missile Launches	<p>Missile launches in the U.S. are essentially nowadays from the east or west coasts going out over the Atlantic or Pacific. You will only see one if you are close to Vandenberg AFB, Calif. or Patrick AFB, Fla. Missiles generally leave a trail of smoke and steam in the sky at the top of which is the missile, which may be hard to see without binoculars. Not common.</p>
Fixed Ground Lights	<p>Fixed ground lights are found in a wide variety of shapes, sizes, and colors. Unusual circumstances might lead to misidentification at times. Knowledge of longterm human activity in the area of observation is necessary to identify fixed ground lights. Not common.</p>
Birds, bats, etc.	<p>Sometimes birds can be briefly mistaken for a true unknown, but the circumstances of observation would have to be quite unusual to fool people: for example, in short duration or difficult viewing circumstances like fog. Herons and cranes are the largest common birds. Flocks of birds at night illuminated from below might be confusing. Not common. Bats are seen at dawn and dusk and have generally more erratic fly patterns than birds since they are after insects. Like most birds, these show up generally as dark spots in the sky or photos. Sometimes, they can show up as white, for example, like seagulls in sunny conditions. Not common.</p>
Clouds	<p>Unusually shaped clouds might fool a few people. The common lenticular cloud appears as a stationary object near mountain tops in some regions. Not common.</p>
Contrails	<p>These long, narrow cloud-like objects (condensation trails) in the sky are due to water vapor and particulates from jet exhaust that condense into droplets of water or ice crystals. Contrails follow immediately behind the jet engines of the aircraft that produce them. The craft are high-flying commercial or military aircraft (at around 20,000 feet and above usually). Not common.</p>
Chemtrails	<p>Similar to contrails, the controversial "chemtrails" phenomenon (short for chemistry trails) is produced by military aircraft (or possibly some kind of "UFO") as the result of non-jet fuel-related chemical substances being introduced into the exhaust stream of the jet engines of the aircraft. Proponents claim that the chemtrails expand to create a generally cloudy, overcast sky and that the airplanes and/or "UFOs" that produce them many times criss-cross the sky to make a hatch pattern that gradually fills the sky. Proponents of a real chemtrail phenomenon speculate that the purpose is weather modification, population control, etc. Not common.</p>

ID Candidate	Characteristics
Optical Effects	These are various kinds of effects that occur as light passes through a transparent medium such as the glass of camera lenses. "UFOs" seen through windows, car windshields, glasses, etc., can sometimes fool people. Window reflections are understood by most all observers since they are so common. When a person removes his or her glasses or goes outside to see if the observed effect is still there, he or she is unconsciously acknowledging that they know about reflections and their power to mislead us. See Photo Artifacts. Consult with your local or MUFON HQ photo and video analysts since this area is not easy to define. Not common.
Orbs in Photos	This is a common artifact created in digital photos when the built-in flash fires during a photo. Generally, the cheaper the camera, the more common the problem of unwanted orbs showing up in photos. The orbs are few to numerous, big to small, paler than the surrounding image areas, and almost always round. They are produced by the built-in flash being too close to the lens axis of the camera. Cheaper cameras and cellphone cameras are, thus, more prone to orbs because of the closeness of the flash and lens. People don't report seeing orbs. They show up only in photos after the fact. If you can show that in a particular photo that the flash did not fire (look at the EXIF data), then the anomaly is more interesting. There is a little scientific research supporting the idea that orbs may be a real paranormal phenomenon and, of course, orb-type objects have been associated with UFO for a long time. See the WWII foo fighters phenomenon. Not common.
Hoax	Hoaxes are initiated by people with intent to deceive investigators and members of the public. There are many hoaxed UFO photos and videos on the Internet. There are sometimes hoaxed CMS reports and reports to other UFO report collection organizations. Very occasionally there are "skeptical," know-it-all crackpots who perpetrate a UFO hoax that manages to fool local news reporting media. Hoaxes are usually fairly easy to figure out for the experienced UFO investigator. Not common.
Moondog, sundog	The moondog is an effect analogous to the sundog, which appears on either side of the sun or moon when a thin layer of ice crystals are between the sun or moon and the observer. Rare.
Blimps, Dirigibles	Blimps are non-rigid, football-shaped, helium-filled aircraft. They cruise around 70 m.p.h. (very slow for an aircraft) and are around 150 or so feet long. The commercial ones are used for advertising. The Goodyear blimp(s) is the most famous. They can be seen in the day or at night. Their movements can be very unusual since they are usually trying to be seen over a populated area for advertising. Military blimps are rarely seen in the U.S. except for the tethered variety. These are tied to the ground and stationary, can be up to 15,000 feet above sea level. They are seen near the Mexico border. Rare.
Plastic Bags	Plastic bags come in a variety of shapes, sizes, colors, and designs. Mainly, we are concerned here with the very thin, very light weight, smaller bags that many stores offer to customers to carry out purchased goods. These very light weight bags can be lifted up from the ground by winds and can be caught up to great heights above the Earth in some circumstances. They can very occasionally be found perhaps up to a mile or so in altitude. See the <i>Milwaukie Amoeba UFOs</i> case on oregonmufon.com for an interesting case that fooled an OM investigator for a while. Rare.
Prank Balloons	Prank balloons may be launched occasionally by teenage boys (or mentally teenaged men!) to have some fun. Look for this around July 4th, Halloween, New Years Eve, etc. These are balloons and travel on the wind, but may go up and down with the wind currents. The main motion is usually upward, however, unless the winds are around 10 mph or higher. These can get their buoyancy from helium or hot air. They may have small lights attached. This was more frequent in the era of the 1950s, 60s, and 70s when newspapers and TV stations would report UFO sightings much more than they do today. Rare.
Search Lights	Search lights can be seen if they strike clouds or other objects in the sky. Their beam may also be seen as a column of lighter toned air if the air is very dusty or foggy. They can be any color. Search lights are usually associated with advertising such as at a car dealership. Rare.

ID Candidate	Characteristics
Flares	These are used mostly by the military to light up the night sky or ground, and they drift slowly to the ground over some minutes time. If you view them with binoculars, you will probably be able to observe the smoke they give off. Multiple flares would fall independently of each other. A distress flare would be fired from the ground into the air and would not rise above 500 to 1000 feet. Military flares would be dropped from an aircraft probably. Rare.
Insects	Insects can show up especially in telephoto photographs where the intervening space is compressed and the insect(s) show up larger than their expected tiny size. Look for insect IDs in spring, summer, and fall, but not winter. Hardly reported as naked eye "UFO" sightings. Rare.
Test Clouds	Very rarely, scientific, technical, or military activities result in test clouds, which can be various colors, but usually do not have definite shape, at least for very long. Tracking down the source might be difficult. Rare.
Mirages	The common hot weather mirage is mostly a desert Southwest phenomenon. Optical effects due to differently refracting layers of air can make it appear that solid objects are being observed when they are actually just the result of reflection and refraction. Rare.
Video Artifacts	See Photo Artifacts. Video artifacts exist, of course, but no particularly new artifacts are introduced over photo artifacts since video is essentially a series of still photos one after the other. Analysis is best left to a video specialist if you have compelling video of a possible genuine UFO. See MUFON HQ or local video experts for analysis. Rare.
Mental Effects	This is a catch-all term for those very few cases where you suspect that a witness is highly imaginative and "loosely" connected with the outside world reality that most of us acknowledge when we are awake, can talk, and are not influenced by drugs, alcohol, etc. Try to separate this category from "standard" psychic/paranormal phenomena (which are part of the UFO phenomenon). Some people are actually "crazy" and some people are not "crazy" yet live in a highly imaginative fantasy world of their own construction. Rare.