

## 226. MEDICAL EXAMINER NOTIFICATION



### RICHFIELD POLICE DEPARTMENT POLICY

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Authority: Chief Jay Henthorne

*NOTE: This policy is for internal use only and does not enlarge an employee's civil or criminal liability in any way. It should not be construed as the creation of a higher standard of safety or care in an evidentiary sense, with respect to third party claims. Violations of this policy, if proven, can only form the basis of a complaint by this Department, and then only in a non-judicial administrative setting.*

### I. PURPOSE

The purpose of this Policy is to establish procedures for personnel to follow that will assist the Hennepin County Medical Examiner at the scene of a death investigation.

### II. POLICY

The Hennepin County Medical Examiner will be promptly notified of any death, except in specific cases listed below involving nursing home patients.

### III. PROCEDURE

#### **MEDICAL EXAMINER NOTIFICATION**

In any death, the Medical Examiner **shall** be notified by calling (612) 215-6300. However, if the officer intends to notify investigations because of suspicious circumstances, the officer should wait until the Investigator has been contacted before notifying the Medical Examiner (or Crime Lab). If possible, the Investigator should be on the scene when the M.E. or Crime Lab are present.

The officer should determine the following, if possible, before calling the Medical Examiner; however, the officer should not do anything which could inadvertently result in a death notification without first obtaining authorization from the Medical Examiner. (Refer to Policy #227 "Emergency Notifications" for additional information concerning authorization from the Medical Examiner.)

- 1) Condition of body.
- 2) Any signs of trauma or foul play.
- 3) Health history of deceased.
- 4) Medication of deceased.
- 5) Name and phone number for deceased's physician.
- 6) Any other unusual or unexplained circumstances.
- 7) Name and phone number of deceased's closest next-of-kin.
- 8) The last time the deceased saw a doctor.

The medical examiner's investigator will decide if the Medical Examiner has jurisdiction of the case. If the medical examiner's office assumes jurisdiction of the case, they will take responsibility for the deceased. If jurisdiction in a specific case is declined, the medical examiner's office will release the deceased to the next-of-kin. The next-of-kin should be informed that final disposition of the body is their responsibility and that they should contact a funeral home of their choice.

The police officer at the scene of an unattended death should wait until the medical examiner's investigator arrives before examining the billfold and personal effects.

The officer should not remove clothing or effects, handle the body, alter the scene (including moving of weapons or items on or near the body), or perform a postmortem examination except by specific authorization of the Medical Examiner, his/her deputies, or his/her investigators.

### **MEDICAL EXAMINER INFORMATION AND SERVICES**


Next-of-kin should be directed to contact the Office of the Medical Examiner, 530 Chicago Avenue South, Minneapolis, Minnesota, 55415, for information as to the circumstances of the death, cause of death, and concerns about personal effects. In many instances the medical examiner personnel will be contacting the family for information which may be helpful in the case.

Information concerning the cause of death may be obtained from the Medical Examiner's Office. A copy of the medical examiner's report may be obtained by the law enforcement and prosecutorial agencies investigating the death. Any other person or agency must have authorization from the next of kin to obtain a copy of the autopsy and/or medical examiner's report.

The Medical Examiner's Office will have primary responsibility for notifying the decedent's next-of-kin in cases in which they have jurisdiction. (See Policy #227 "Emergency Notifications" for additional information.)

In cases involving non-lethal injuries that may later result in criminal charges, the Medical Examiner may be available to examine victims with external injuries. This sort of formal documentation may be of value in cases involving victims who later succumb to their injuries and ultimately come under the Medical Examiner's Office jurisdiction.

By Order Of:

  
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Chief of Police