

**Policy Title: MEDICAL EXAMINER/CORONER GUIDELINES****No. M - 4****Board Approval: 3/94****Effective: 5/1/96****Supersedes: 1/90****Page: 1 of 1****I. POLICY**

- A. Illinois State Statute, Chapter 31, Section 10.6, states: "Every law enforcement official, funeral director, ambulance attendant, hospital director or administrator or persons having custody of a body of a deceased person, where the death is one subject to investigation under Chapter 31, the Coroner's Act, shall notify the Coroner or Deputy Coroner promptly."
- B. "No dead body, which may be subject to the terms of the Coroner's Act shall be moved, disturbed, embalmed or removed from the place of death by any person except with the permission of the Coroner/Medical Examiner unless moving the body shall be necessary to protect life, safety or health."
- C. "Any person knowingly violating the provisions of this section shall be guilty of a Class A misdemeanor."

**II. PROCEDURE**

- A. If there is any chance of preserving the life of a patient who appears to be clinically dead, initiate the appropriate SOP and transport to the nearest hospital by travel time.
- B. If the person is deceased and exhibits one or more of the long-term indications of death specified in the Triple Zero policy, confirm and document Triple Zero per System Policy and notify police if not already present.
- C. Under usual and customary procedures, police officers are responsible for notifying the Coroner/Medical Examiner's office and/or the attending physician to determine if he/she will sign the death certificate.
- D. EMS personnel may be asked to remain on the scene until released by the Coroner/Medical Examiner or their agent. In general, it is the position of the NWC EMSS that prehospital providers should minimize, as much as possible, the amount of time spent in service at the scene of these cases or in transporting deceased individuals to hospitals, funeral homes or M.E. locations. Whenever possible, use alternate modes of transportation, i.e., police or funeral home. "Ambulances are for the living, not the dead" (DuPage County Coroner).
- E. EMS providers shall follow local Medical Examiner/Coroner policies when responding to an obvious death on the scene. See attachments. Complete copies of detailed reports issued by the Cook County Medical Examiner's office and the DuPage Coroner's office are available from the Resource Hospital EMS office upon written request.

Attachments: Guidelines for the following counties: Cook, DuPage, Kane, Lake, and McHenry.

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EMS Medical Director

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## **LAKE COUNTY CORONER**

**Office of the Coroner**  
**26 N. Utica Street**  
**Waukegan, IL 60085**

**Phone: 847/360-6617 (Business Hours 8:00 am - 5:00 pm M-F)**  
**847/549-5200 (Lake County Sheriff's Office - evenings and weekends)**

### **Notification criteria:**

1. A sudden or violent death, whether apparently suicidal, homicidal or accidental.
2. A maternal death or fetal death, due to abortion.
3. A suspicious, obscure or mysterious death.
4. A death where suspicion of addiction to alcohol or drugs may have been a contributing cause.
5. A natural death where the decedent was not attended by a licensed physician or occurring within 24 hours of admission to a hospital.

Someone from the Lake County Coroner's office will come to the place where the dead body is and take charge of the scene and shall make a preliminary investigation of the death or will release the body to a funeral home.

### **General guidelines:**

1. In a homicide, obvious or suspected, it affects our case very much to move the body. You are giving the culprit a chance to beat the case; even by moving the body from one room to another, you are destroying evidence, and then it is virtually impossible for us to get a conviction.  
  
Please leave the body alone when death is obvious. Contact the Coroner's office and await the Coroner's arrival.
2. Death pronouncement is not as important if it is not a violent death.
3. Transportation is an area of common sense. If you get on the scene and have an obviously dead person, do not transport. On the other hand, if you have the chance to save somebody's life, transport to the closest appropriate hospital. Crossing county lines is not as important as the patient's well-being.
4. If you do cross county lines, automatically send a copy of the run sheet to the Coroner's office. Otherwise, it alters their statistics.

## **COOK COUNTY MEDICAL EXAMINER**

**Office of the Medical Examiner  
County of Cook  
Cook County Institute of Forensic Medicine  
2121 West Harrison Street  
Chicago, IL 60612  
Phone: 312/666-0600 or 0200**

### **Notification guidelines:**

1. Criminal violence
2. Suicide
3. Accident
4. Sudden death, when apparently in good health
5. Unattended by a practicing, licensed physician
6. Criminal abortion
7. Poisoning or attributable to an adverse reaction to drugs/alcohol
8. Disease constituting a threat to public health
9. Disease, injury or toxic agent resulting from employment
10. Death during medical diagnostic or therapeutic procedures
11. Death in a prison or penal institute
12. Death when involuntarily confined in jail, prison hospitals or other institutions or in police custody
13. When a human body is to be cremated, dissected or buried at sea
14. Unclaimed bodies
15. When a dead body is brought into a new medico-legal jurisdiction without proper certification

THE EMS PROVIDER WILL REPORT ANY SUCH DEATH TO THE MEDICAL EXAMINER OR LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICER.

### **Scene guidelines:**

1. The body should not be moved unless authorized by the Medical Examiner or representative unless preserving such body from damage by destruction or to protect life, safety or health.
2. Phone: 312/666-0600 or 0200.
3. The case goes to the county where the body is pronounced, even though the death didn't happen in the county.
4. The inquest and/or the investigation should take place in the county where the death occurred. In Cook County, no inquest is conducted. Since paramedics are not authorized to pronounce death, it is helpful if the body is pronounced by someone authorized to do so, but not necessarily a physician, before county lines are crossed.

## DUPAGE COUNTY CORONER

Please call the following phone numbers on ALL CORONER CASES:

708/682-7500 - Monday through Friday (8:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.)

708/682-7256 - After 4:30 p.m. daily and on Saturdays, Sundays and holidays

Coroner of DuPage County  
414 N. County Farm Rd.  
Wheaton, IL 60187

### Notification guidelines:

1. Accidental deaths - all deaths relating to employment including:
  - a. anesthetic accident.
  - b. blows or other forms of mechanical violence.
  - c. crushed beneath falling objects.
  - d. cutting or stabbing.
  - e. drowning.
  - f. electric shock.
  - g. explosion.
  - h. exposure.
  - i. firearm accidents.
  - j. fractures of bones.
  - k. falls.
  - l. carbon monoxide poisoning.
  - m. hanging.
  - n. heat exhaustion.
  - o. insolation (heat stroke).
  - p. poisoning.
  - q. strangulation.
  - r. suffocation.
  - s. vehicular accidents.
2. Homicidal deaths
3. Suicidal deaths
4. Abortions: Criminal or self-induced fetal deaths.

When the manner of death falls within the above classifications, such death must be reported to the Coroner even though the survival period subsequent to onset is 12 months.

5. Sudden deaths
  - a. Alcoholism
  - b. Sudden death on the street, at home, in a public place, at place of employment
  - c. Deaths under unknown circumstances, whenever there are no witnesses or where little or no information can be elicited concerning the deceased person. Deaths of this type include those persons whose dead bodies are found in the open, in places of temporary shelter, or in their homes under conditions which offer no clues to the cause of death.
  - d. Deaths which follow injuries sustained in a place of employment whenever the circumstances surrounding such injury may ultimately be subject of investigation. This classification includes:
    - 1) Caisson disease (bends)
    - 2) Industrial infections (anthrax, septicemia following wounds including gas bacillus infections, tetanus, etc.)
    - 3) Silicosis

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- 4) Industrial poisonings (acids, alkalines, aniline, benzene, carbon monoxide, carbon tetrachloride, cyanogens, lead, nitrous fumes, etc.)
- 5) Contusion, abrasion, fractures, burns (flame, chemical or electrical) received during employment which in the opinion of the attending physician are sufficiently important, either as the cause or contributing factor to the cause of death, to warrant certifying them on the death certificate.
6. All stillborn infants where there is suspicion of illegal interference.
7. Deaths of persons where the attending physician cannot be found or deaths of persons who have not been attended by a physician within one week prior to the day of death.
8. All deaths occurring within 24 hours of admission to a hospital unless the patient has been under continuous care of a physician for natural disease which is responsible for the death.
9. All hip fractures if the patient dies within one year and one month, will be Coroner's cases and the Coroner must be notified.
10. All deaths in State institutions/deaths of wards of State.
11. Any death which occurs within DuPage County, and not at a hospital or nursing home facility (at any residence, employer and/or public facility).

### **Scene guidelines:**

1. Once the person is taken over county lines, it is up to that Medical Examiner/Coroner to handle it.
2. In an emergency, transport the patient to the closest appropriate emergency department. Preservation of human life takes precedence over investigational jurisdictions.
3. We do not need to know about a body taken out of DuPage County. The death would be reported twice on two counties' statistics.
4. If foul play is suspected, request police on the scene. If you have to move the body for safety reasons, take a few notes, i.e., the body is four feet from the dresser, lying on its left side, or better yet, get a quick snapshot if you can. If there is a fire, fog the body instead of putting it out with water.
5. Move a body as little as you can, but if you move it for safety reasons, we'll back you 100%. Just make sure you let us know about it so we can put it on the report.
6. If the person is deceased, clear the scene, and notify the Coroner. Do not disturb the scene. Do not transport.
7. Ambulances are for the living, not for the dead, and because of such, the attendants (paramedics) are released immediately upon our return call to them.

## **MCHENRY COUNTY CORONER**

**2200 North Seminary Avenue  
Woodstock, IL 60098**

**Phone: 815/338-9392 (Hours: 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. M-F)  
815/338-2144 McHenry County Sheriff's Police (evenings and weekends)**

### **Notification criteria:**

1. Notify the Coroner's office of a death during the day. They will send the Coroner to the scene to pronounce death. If after office hours, notify McHenry County Sheriff's Police. They will call the Deputy Coroner on duty for the night and he/she will come to the scene to pronounce death and arrange for transportation of the body by a funeral home.
2. In normal home death cases EMTs may leave the scene in custody of police after confirming Triple Zero with a System hospital. If the death is due to a suspected homicide, suicide or is unusual in any way, the coroner requests that EMTs remain on the scene for questioning.
3. For anything other than usual deaths the Coroner requests that EMTs are careful to maintain scene integrity so they do not disturb any evidence, such as moving the body, cutting down hanging victims or extricating automobile accident victims.
4. They are aware that EMS providers are out of service while they wait and affirm that they would attempt to expedite their investigation and determinations as fast as possible.

## **KANE COUNTY CORONER**

**Kane County Government Center**  
**719 South Batavia Avenue Bldg. E**  
**Geneva, IL 60134**

**Phones: 708/232-3535 (Hours: 8:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m. M-F)**  
**Evenings & Weekends: Call Sheriff's office: 708/232-8400 and they will page Deputy Coroner on call.**

### **Notification criteria:**

Any person who discovers the body or acquires the first knowledge of the death of any person who died as a result of criminal or other violent means, or by casualty, suicide or suddenly when in apparent health, or in any suspicious or unusual manner, shall immediately notify the Coroner of the known facts concerning the death and any other information which is required by the Coroner.

Following are the deaths which should be reported:

1. "D.O.A." at a hospital, home, nursing home or any other place.
2. Sudden or violent death on the street, at home, in a public place or at a place of employment. This category includes, but is not limited to deaths caused by thermal, traumatic, chemical, electrical or radiation injury, drowning or suffocation.
3. Maternal or fetal death due to criminal abortion, or any death due to a sex crime, or a crime against nature.
4. Death where addiction to alcohol or to any drug may have been a contributory factor.
5. Death without medical attendance within the past 30 days.
6. Death which has occurred within 30 days of being exposed to a contagious disease.
7. Death which has occurred within 24 hours of being hospitalized.
8. All deaths in institutions, including:
  - a) Mental health
  - b) Penal or correctional
  - c) All wards of the State in private care facilities, i.e., all public aid, mental health or developmental disabilities, or
  - d) Dept. of Children and Family Services recipients
9. All deaths where the circumstances are suspicious, obscure or mysterious.

This list serves only as a guideline. If in doubt about a death, call the coroner. Do not remove the body until the Coroner's Office has been notified and they have authorized removal.