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VOLUME 1 PHILOSOPHY AND ORGANIZATION

1.100. Philosophy

The Department derives its philosophy from its motto: “Dedicated to Your Safety.” It emphasizes the devotion of its members to protect all persons from criminal attack, to ensure they are secure in their possessions, and to live in peace. Although the Division and its members do not perform a law enforcement function, they nonetheless are dedicated to protecting those same interests. The members of the Division enthusiastically serve the County and those living, working and recreating within its boundaries by investigating vigorously why deaths occur, and sensitively conveying this information to decedents’ families; by reporting to law enforcement and public health officials the emergence of dangerous trends; and, by taking into safekeeping valuable personal property of decedents that otherwise might be lost or stolen. The Division commits to providing these services professionally and sensitively, in a manner the public both expects and deserves.

1.102. Vision Statement

The Division and each of its members accept the Code of Ethics of the International Association of Coroners and Medical Examiners; and, as appropriate, the Code of Medical Ethics of the American Medical Association.

1.104. Value Statement

The Division and each of its members believe in strong, effective medico-legal death investigative services. In addition to the standards articulated in this section of Department policy, we value the principles of the Codes of Ethics of the International Association of Coroners and Medical Examiners, and the American Medical Association.

1.108. The Coroner Mission

The California Government Code generally outlines the responsibilities of medico-legal death agencies throughout the State. The statute also allows those agencies broad discretion to determine methods for accepting reports of death, and for assigning investigations. Volume 3 identifies the guidelines for conducting such investigations.

The primary functions are:

Determining Cause of Death. Broadly, cause of death is the medical condition that led directly to a person’s death. Therefore, this determination in the Coroner Division is made by a medical doctor after review of medical records and, at times, an appropriate post-mortem examination. Causes of death may sometimes be accepted from a decedent’s primary care or attending physician. In certain instances (outlined below) the determination of cause of death shall be made by a properly certified forensic pathologist acting on behalf of the Division.

Determining Manner of Death. Manner of death is an assignment of causes of death into one of several categories. Those categories are homicide, suicide, accident, natural, and undetermined. Manner of death determinations rely primarily on the circumstances present at the time of, or just prior to, death. Identifying and explaining these circumstances is accomplished through investigations, usually conducted in the field. Manner of death, therefore, is usually determined by investigators after appropriate consultation with the County’s forensic pathologists. Manner of death requires

consideration of the totality of circumstances identified by investigators and forensic pathologists. Volume 3 of this manual provides additional direction for the determination of manner of death.

Identification. It is imperative that decedents are properly identified. Misidentification is known to bring families undue grief; to cause undue financial hardship; and, to negatively impact the professional reputation of the Department. Therefore, the Division generally requires identification by forensic means, including but not limited to comparisons of fingerprints or dental records to those of decedents, or through the matching of genetic material of family donors to the decedent. When these methods are not viable, the Division must rely upon circumstantial indicators to make identification. It does so by attempting to amass to a preponderance of information indicating a decedent's identity. Verbal identification from an authoritative source may be accepted when no stronger circumstances are available.

Notification. It is similarly imperative to inform a decedent's family members of his passing. First, the Health and Safety Code (section 7100 and following) sets forth a hierarchy of persons with a responsibility to make disposition of a person's remains. Failure to notify the decedent's legal next of kin, or other designee, of his passing delays timely disposition that results in confusion, and the passing of financial responsibilities to the wrong person or entity. Second, delays in notification, or notification to someone not identified in the statute, may place the County in a position of civil liability. Although the Division has the ultimate responsibility for making notification, the process, with approval of the on-duty Supervising Deputy Coroner Investigator, may be delegated to other appropriate authorities.

Generally, the Division requires that death notifications be made in person, when the decedent's family is known to be in San Bernardino County, or within a reasonable driving distance from its boundaries. Two other options are available for notifications beyond those boundaries. Investigators may request that a law enforcement agency or other medico-legal death investigative agency make the notification on the Division's behalf. Or, notification may be made telephonically with the permission of the on-duty Supervising Deputy Coroner Investigator.

Securing and Releasing Personal Property. Staff shall ensure the security of personal property on the body or under the constructive control of the decedent immediately prior to his death. Specifically, the property to be secured includes any item that one reasonably might conclude is subject to theft, loss, or destruction.

Further, property shall be released to any person with the legal right to accept it, beginning with the decedent's immediate legal next of kin; or, to a law enforcement agent when the property is asserted to be evidence in a criminal investigation.

Procedures for taking and releasing personal property are found in Volume 5 of this manual.

Disposition of Remains. Remains are considered property of sorts, and, when in the custody of the Coroner, shall be released to the identified legal next of kin or his designee. When, after a due-diligence search, no next of kin is discovered, the disposition shall be accomplished through processes established by statute and policy.

1.114. Employee Development

Deputy Coroner Investigators are required to attend a Coroner Basic Training academy. Their attendance is a continuation of the selection process, whereby efforts are made to provide a level of knowledge necessary to enter the field of medico-legal death investigations.

The development of investigators and autopsy assistants is accomplished through extensive field training programs developed for each discipline.

Advanced training is accomplished in accordance with statutory requirements or Division needs (or both) and coordinated by the Commander or his designee.

Additional elements of the Division's approach to member development are presented in Section 1.1000 of this volume.

1.210. Previous Regulations Revoked

All manuals, orders, and other regulations of the San Bernardino Coroner Division existing prior to January 8, 2005 have been revoked. This Division manual represents policies, orders, guidelines and procedures established, or modified (or both), in August 2019.

1.214. Organization of the Division Manual

The organization of this manual shall be identical to that used in the Department manual.

1.214.10 Employee Access to Division Manual

Members may access the Division manual electronically through a portal established by the Department. Employees may print and retain hard-copy versions of Division policy sections for reference or training purposes.

1.216. Bureau, Division, and Unit Manuals

This manual satisfies the requirements of Department policy section 1.216.

The Department manual shall have precedence if any portion of it is found in conflict with this manual.

1.220. Division Manual Oversight

The Commander shall at least once annually cause this manual to be reviewed thoroughly. He shall document this review on an Interoffice Memorandum, which shall be retained as directed by County policy.

1.224. Revisions to the Division Manual

Revisions to this manual shall occur in one of two ways.

First, the Commander may issue amendments, which include additions, changes, and deletions.

Second, members may suggest revisions in writing on an Interoffice Memorandum to the Lieutenant, using the chain of command. The memorandum shall include a recommended section heading for placement of the modification. The Lieutenant shall with the Supervising Deputy Coroner II review all proposed amendments. The Lieutenant may return the proposed amendments to the suggesting member with instructions for further action. Or, the Lieutenant shall, upon concurrence, forward the

proposal to the Commander for his review. Upon approval, the revision shall be placed into the Division manual.

No substantive revisions, additions or deletions to this manual shall be accomplished without the written approval of the Commander or his designee.

Additions or revisions shall be identified as the date the addition or revision became effective. The effective date shall be printed at the far left on the line below the added or revised section. "Add" shall indicate an addition; "Rev" shall indicate a revision; and either term shall be followed by the date (month and year) the addition or revision became effective.

Following additions, revisions, or deletions, the superseded section shall be retained for a period determined by County policy.

1.232. Definitions

Definitions and terms used in the Department manual are adopted for this manual, unless otherwise indicated.

1.302.10 Primary Deputy Coroner Investigator in Charge of Scene

The primary investigator is typically the first to arrive on a death scene. He is generally considered in charge of the death investigation; and, as related to Coroner activities, in control of deployment, and decision making throughout the incident, unless directed otherwise by a supervisor or relieved by an employee of higher rank.

He shall be considered the Coroner case agent, unless otherwise directed by a Division supervisor.

Division members shall recognize and respect the position of the primary investigator by efficiently and effectively carrying out all lawful orders he may issue.

1.340.46 Coroner

The Division is organized as described in this section of Department policy. Additionally, the Division maintains and periodically deploys two specialized teams: Unidentified Persons, and Recovery. Their operational missions are described in Volume 3 of this manual.

1.502. Order of Rank

The order of rank for specialized peace officers in the Division is:

- Captain
- Lieutenant
- Supervising Deputy Coroner Investigator II
- Supervising Deputy Coroner Investigator I
- Deputy Coroner Investigators

The order of rank for professional staff assigned to clerical duties is:

- Captain
- Lieutenant
- Supervising Office Assistant
- Office Assistants

The order of rank for professional staff assigned to morgue duties is:

- Captain
- Lieutenant
- Supervising Deputy Coroner Investigator II
- Morgue Supervisor (who may be a Supervising Deputy Coroner I)
- Autopsy Assistants

The order of rank for Division employees not specified is:

- Captain
- Lieutenant
- Supervising Deputy Coroner Investigator II

1.520. Supervising Deputy Coroner Investigators

Supervision is divided into two tiers at the Division. Generally, the Supervising Deputy Coroner II is the immediate supervisor of those holding the rank of Supervising Deputy Coroner I. Those holding the rank of Supervising Deputy Coroner I are the direct supervisors of Deputy Coroner Investigators.

1.520.01 Supervising Deputy Coroner Investigator II

Under general direction, plans, organizes and directs the work of various investigative units for the Division; performs related duties as required.

His duties may include, but are not limited to:

- Overseeing and supervising several shifts of investigators and supervising investigators; managing morgue operations and a full clerical staff; assigning and reviewing work; preparing and signing subordinates' evaluations and handling disciplinary actions.
- Interacting with the public, external agencies, mortuaries and others regarding complex issues (e.g., high-profile cases), complaints and investigation results.
- Attending meetings and sometimes serving as a Division representative on various committees, both within and external to County government.
- Ensuring daily emergency and safety coordination duties for the Division; serving as the emergency team-leader and building safety coordinator for the Division.
- Performing investigations, reviewing subordinates' caseloads, providing guidance with difficult investigations, assessing subordinates' training status and making recommendations for improvement, ensuring sufficient shift coverage, and serving as back-up investigator, including holidays and weekends.
- Ensuring case information is processed appropriately from law enforcement to pathology; ensuring coordination of requests from Forensic Pathologists to other Division staff.
- Providing vacation and temporary relief as required.

1.520.02 Supervising Deputy Coroner Investigator I

Under general direction, supervises a staff involved in investigating, certifying, and establishing classifications of death which fall under the Division's jurisdiction; performs related duties as required.

Duties may include, but are not limited to:

- Supervising, assigning, training, and evaluating Deputy Coroner Investigators, or Autopsy Assistants; recommending personnel actions, such as step advances, hiring decisions, and the like.
- Directing the activities of the morgue; coordinating autopsy schedules with the Forensic Pathologists and staff; developing policies and procedures relating to morgue operations.
- Reviewing Deputy Coroner Investigators' cases, investigative reports, and autopsy reports to ensure that investigators use the proper scientific aids in solving problems relative to establishing the manner of death; reviewing and signing certificates of death.
- Managing a limited caseload and assisting Deputy Coroner Investigators with difficult or complex cases.
- Coordinating the disposition of personal property of decedents. Performing periodic audits of the property disposition process to ensure accuracy and timeliness; assisting in complex cases involving property of decedents.
- Maintaining statistical, workload and fiscal records; preparing reports and correspondence.
- Ensuring that the morgue facility meets all standards of hygiene and cleanliness; inspecting contract transport vehicles for cleanliness and mechanical condition and for any damage reported by staff.
- Serving as a liaison with Division management staff and interfaces with other agencies.
- Providing vacation and temporary relief as required.

1.524. Deputy Coroner Investigator

Under direction, investigates, certifies, and establishes classifications of death which fall under the Division's jurisdiction.

Duties include, but are not limited to:

- Assuming authority at scene of death and primary responsibility for determining identity of decedent and proposing the manner of death; photographing, examining, and fingerprinting decedents; lifting, removing, and transporting decedents.
- Initiating investigations to establish cause and manner of death and establishing preliminary classification.
- Requesting identification specialists including but not limited to forensic anthropologists and forensic odontologists.
- Making death notifications to legal next of kin.
- Protecting property of decedents by collecting personal effects and securing them according to other sections of this manual; or by releasing those effects to the legal next of kin or his designee.
- Preparing investigation reports; reviewing autopsy reports; signing certificates of death.
- Maintaining necessary correspondence and reports.
- Providing vacation and temporary relief as required.

1.570. Autopsy Assistants

Assists Forensic Pathologists in performing autopsies, and maintains in a sterilized, disinfected manner the tools, instruments and equipment required for all post-mortem examinations; performs other related duties as assigned.

Duties include, but are not limited to:

- Receiving bodies or remains from scenes of death, including those exposed to severe trauma or disfigurement; transporting bodies or remains to the morgue for assessments and examinations; performing assessments from off-site locations, such as a disaster site or mortuary.
- Performing full-body assessments by examining, describing and recording external identification marks of the decedent, including height, weight, hair and eye color, scars, deformations, and blemishes.
- Assisting Forensic Pathologists with autopsies; using a variety of tools, instruments, and oscillating saws to open the body cavity and skull; excising organs and specimens using instruments such as scissors and knives; closing the body cavity and skull according to appropriate suturing techniques and procedures; assisting in preparing bodies for release to mortuaries.
- Preparing specimens for lab examination by using chemical preservatives and by weighing, measuring and describing specimens; mixing solutions, collecting and preparing specimens for toxicological analysis, and preparing for shipment; properly discarding specimens after appropriate storage period.
- X-raying human remains, developing X-ray film; photographing human remains and taking fingerprints, including special printing techniques.
- Maintaining forensic facility and autopsy rooms in an organized manner and according to established standards of sanitation; cleaning and sterilizing laboratory tools, instruments, and equipment.
- Testifying in court.
- Maintaining and ensuring various logs and records are accurate.
- Assisting investigators with body recovery and securing the body and any personal property of the deceased at the scene of death.
- Providing vacation and temporary relief as required.
- Inputting and/or retrieving information from various computer programs.

1.570.1 Indigent Burial Specialist

Under general supervision, performs a variety of investigative duties and administrative functions integral to disposition of indigent decedents.

Duties may include, but are not limited to:

- Coordinating indigent disposition by conducting investigations to determine a decedent's eligibility for program participation; interviewing family members and friends, and reviewing decedent's insurance policies, financial background and other sources to determine available assets as part of the eligibility process.
- Conducting research and interacting with various individuals, departments, agencies and databases (e.g., Social Security Administration, investigative staff, Assistant Public Administrator or Public Guardian, County Assessor's Office and Assessor's databases, mortuaries/cemeteries).
- Receiving, balancing and processing daily revenues from decedents' trusts, families, friends, various agencies and the public for charges related to transportation, embalming, and Coroner

investigative reports and subpoena fees; ensuring that monies collected are transmitted to the appropriate County agent.

- Processing mass burials for unclaimed cremated remains; preparing contracts for burial and cremation, and processing legal documents, including death certificates, and burial permits.
- Creates summary reports for the Department as assigned.
- Providing vacation and temporary relief as required.

1.636. Rewards and Gratuities

The provisions and restrictions of this section of the Department manual hereby extend as well to members of the Coroner Division.

1.672. Peace Officer Status: Outside of California

Peace officer powers of San Bernardino County Deputy Coroner Investigators and their immediate supervisors do not extend beyond this state.

1.674.20 Prohibited Outside Employment: Specialized Peace Officers

Specialized Peace Officers shall not accept any employment that is prohibited by law for a peace officer. This section of the Department manual provides examples of outside employment Safety members are prohibited from accepting. Those examples apply also to Specialized Peace Officers.

1.824.15 Relations with Foreign Diplomatic Personnel

The Coroner Division has responsibilities beyond those of the law enforcement divisions within the Department. Among those responsibilities is ensuring that a decedent's legal next of kin has the opportunity to arrange for proper disposition, an effort made more difficult when those persons may be reluctant to interact with government officials.

It is the responsibility of the Commander to develop and maintain relationships that will mitigate or eliminate such reluctance.

Therefore, it is incumbent upon the Division command staff to establish and maintain professional relationships with the staff at foreign consulates located in or near the County seat.

1.828.10 News Media and Release of Information

The Commander or his designee shall function as the primary liaison between the Division and the media. Generally, he shall designate a supervisor to manage daily or routine inquiries. However, the Commander, Lieutenant, or the Supervising Deputy Coroner II shall assume media liaison duties in extraordinary or high-profile matters. Alternatively, the Commander may defer this function to the Department's Public Affairs Division.

The Commander, Lieutenant, or the Supervising Deputy Coroner Investigator II shall respond to requests for statistics or other information regarding the function of the Division.

1.828.20 Press Releases

Although Department policy grants the Division responsibility for approving and posting its press releases, the Division recognizes that some deference is proper when other divisions are involved in certain incidents. Therefore, it will refrain from issuing press releases involving suspected homicides and child abuse cases under investigation by other divisions of the Department. The Division shall seek to

coordinate the release of information on similar incidents under investigation by other law enforcement agencies, but in all circumstances commits to carrying out the requirements of statute and Department directives.

Press releases are considered the most effective way of communicating to the public, through the media, the day-to-day investigative activities of the Division. Therefore, press releases shall be prepared for the following types of investigations:

- Traffic and boating fatalities
- Accidents including but not limited to:
 - Drowning
 - Electrocution
 - Unusual deaths
- Deaths where the decedents are in view of the public

Press releases may be prepared for other investigations of a more sensitive nature. In matters involving a criminal investigation, only those details shall be released that are required by Government Code section 27463. Other information may be released only if it is generic or authorized by the agency conducting the related criminal investigation.

The following information shall not be released:

- Decedents' specific addresses or their phone numbers;
- The next of kin's name, relationship, address, or phone number;
- The names of surviving individuals involved in the incident.

Section 6254(f) of the Government Code allows the withholding of information from the public if the disclosure would endanger the safety of a witness or other person involved in the investigation, or if disclosure would endanger the successful completion of the investigation or related investigations. Therefore, press releases about incidents wherein a collateral criminal investigation is occurring shall be coordinated with that agency before they are made public.

No press release shall be made public until a watch commander has reviewed and approved it. The purpose of this review is to ensure that it complies with all Division and Department standards.

For the purposes of this section, unusual cases include, but are not limited to, those involving:

- Four or more deaths at any singular incident;
- In-custody deaths;
- Traumatic death of a public official, or personnel from a law enforcement or fire agency;
- Aircraft and mass transit fatalities;
- Industrial accidents;
- Public suicides.

1.1000. Member Development

1.1120. Employee Orientation and Training Plans

The Commander shall ensure that appropriate orientation and training plans are created for each employee classification under his command; and, shall designate a supervisor or field training officer to oversee those processes.

Development plans for volunteer members are described in Volume 7 of this manual.

1.1225. Policy Manual Review

Members are responsible for familiarization with Department and Division manuals, and for adhering to their policies and procedures. New or revised policies shall be distributed to each employee. It is assumed when the distribution occurs that employee has read and understood them. It is the employee's responsibility to contact his supervisor for clarification if required.

To ensure that other members are informed, the immediate supervisor of the unit or individual shall inform them of the changes and shall document in an Interoffice Memorandum to the Commander the date and time the information was conveyed, the method conveyed, and the names of the persons receiving the information.

Volume 2 ADMINISTRATION AND MANAGEMENT

2.114.10 Issuance of Business Cards

In addition to the standards set forth in this section of Department policy, business cards of Deputy Coroner Investigators and their supervisors shall include their desk telephone numbers and their Department email addresses.

2.130. Division Staff Meetings

The Commander shall meet periodically with designated members of Division staff. The purpose of the meeting is to ensure that appropriate information is circulated from the Commander through the chain of command to all members of the Division. The information should include items from Department staff meeting regarding budgets (for example overtime and staffing), training, and current or pending legislation. The Commander further should discuss with staff any information that might bear upon operations. Finally, the Division staff meeting should provide the opportunity for the Commander to be briefed on opportunities or challenges within the Division that need his attention.

Designated members of the Division shall attend staff meetings.

Supervisors shall timely disseminate information discussed in this meeting to their subordinates.

2.132.20 Inspection and Control

The Commander shall ensure that periodic inspections are made of the facility, and its vehicles and equipment; and shall, at the time of those inspections, evaluate staff's familiarity with policies and procedures and their adherence thereto. The Commander shall ensure that those inspections are documented in a manner he shall establish. The purpose is to ensure the facility reflects the highest level of care, and that members are familiar with policy and procedure.

2.138.15 Duty Schedule

It shall be the responsibility of the Commander to prepare an on-call schedule for the Lieutenant and the Supervising Deputy Coroner II, and to distribute it to all concerned personnel.

2.140. On-Call Division Staff

The Commander and the designated second in command shall be scheduled by the Commander as on-call staff. This is in compliance with Department policy requiring divisions, at all time, to have either a captain, lieutenant, or a designated second in command available on call when no captain or lieutenant is on duty.

The Commander shall post, and keep current, a schedule of the on-call staff. This schedule shall be on a rotating basis.

2.144. Notification and Response Matrix

The Commander shall create and make available a matrix that augments the Department Notification and Response Matrix. It shall be in effect primarily for incidents related to Coroner operations, but also may implicate Division-level responses in addition to those the Department requires.

It shall be the responsibility of all supervisory and investigative staff to be familiar with Department's Notification and Response Matrix. Generally, notifications made to Department members not assigned to the Coroner Division shall be communicated through the Division's chain of command.

Further, many incidents that do not require notification in accordance with the matrix nonetheless must be communicated to Coroner Division command staff. Those incidents are categorized below, according to the method of contact.

Notifications that shall be made by telephone include, but may not be limited to:

- Lethal force encounter or in custody death involving SBSB;
- Deaths of active Department members; on-duty fire department personnel; on-duty active military members;
- Railroad closures;
- Incidents in which multiple law enforcement agencies are involved;
- Incidents involving all common commercial carriers (i.e. aircraft crash, occupied buses, passenger trains);
- Full closures of freeway or state highway;
- High profile cases such as deaths at public sporting events, concerts, and the like.

Notifications that shall be made by email include, but may not be limited to:

- Partial closures of interstate or state highway;
- Deaths of retired Department members and off-duty law enforcement or fire personnel;
- Family members of active Department members.

Notifications that shall be made by text (or similar) messages include, but may not be limited to:

- Lethal force encounters or in-custody deaths involving law enforcement agencies other than the Department;
- Deaths related to but not occurring at public sporting or concert venues, and the like;
- Aqueduct incursions resulting in death;
- Deaths of off-duty active military.
- Deaths of in-county politicians, celebrities, or others of national prominence.

[2.148. Command Post](#)

The Division maintains a command post as part of its fleet. It may be used only upon a case-by-case authorization from the Commander, Lieutenant, or Supervising Deputy Coroner Investigator II.

[2.150.45 Information Bulletins and Operations Memoranda](#)

The Division complies with this section by maintaining these documents in an electronic shared file, accessible to all Division members.

[2.404.10 Cancellation of Deputy Report \(DR\) Numbers](#)

DR numbers cancelled by the Coroner shall be documented on the first page of a standard Death Investigation report. No additional pages are required.

[2.408 Division Clerical Manual](#)

The Commander shall ensure a clerical manual is developed that describes procedures unique to the Division. In all other matters, members shall follow the Department Clerical Manual.

2.412.20 Release of Coroner Reports

Generally, Coroner Reports (comprising Death Investigations and Autopsy Protocols) shall not be released prior to their completion and approval. However, persons of the rank of Supervising Deputy Coroner Investigator I or higher may authorize an earlier release of incomplete reports in furtherance of an established government process.

2.508.10 Executive Staff and Alpha Unit Designations

The following alpha designations apply also to these assignments or functions:

“Lincoln” shall be the designator for the Division Lieutenant (70-Lincoln-1), and for the Supervising Deputy Coroner Investigator II (70-Lincoln-2).

“Sam” shall be the designator for members holding the rank of Supervising Deputy Coroner Investigator I.

2.514.10 Requests for Facility/Building Improvements

Requests for repairs to the buildings or facilities shall be made in writing through the chain of command to the Commander or his designee.

2.636.15 Assignment of Department Vehicles

Sheriff's Service Specialists and members of the Division's volunteer unit may use available pool vehicles for approved purposes during the course their shift. They shall be permitted to use County vehicles only during their assigned shifts, and never for personal business.

2.656. Division Key Control System

In keeping with Department policy, the Commander has established a system for accounting for all keys and key cards in the Division.

The Lieutenant shall have charge of the inventory of key cards. He shall keep a log of all key cards, by number, allocated to the Division, and shall enter into a log the number of the card next to the name of the employee to whom it is assigned, and the date the card was assigned to that employee. Upon separation from the Department or transfer from the Division, employees shall return their key card to the Lieutenant, who then shall verify that the number on the card being returned matches the number of the card assigned, and then shall enter the date the card was returned. Cards may be re-used.

The Supervising Office Assistant shall maintain in a secured container all physical keys to the building, internal offices, and locking closets and storage areas. He shall keep a log of keys issued to each employee, and the date issued. Upon separation from the Department or transfer from the Division, employees shall return to the Supervising Office Assistant all facility keys issued to them. The Supervising Office Assistant then shall verify that the keys being returned match the keys issued to the employee; and, then shall make a log entry of the date the keys were returned.

The Lieutenant and the Supervising Office Assistant may, at their discretion, require additional forms or documentation of key cards and keys issued and received.

Vehicle keys shall be kept in a locked key control box that can be monitored by Supervising Deputy Coroner Investigators or their superiors. The Commander shall assign to a Sheriff's Service Specialist the responsibility for maintaining a log of vehicle keys kept in the control box. The specialist also shall be

responsible for ensuring that employees to whom take-home vehicles are assigned are issued the proper key. The specialist also shall receive vehicle keys returned to the Division upon the separation from the Department or transfer from the Division of a person previously assigned a take-home vehicle. The specialist shall report immediately to a watch commander the failure of an employee to return a vehicle key. The watch commander then shall ensure the key is returned.

2.1000. General Administration and Management of the Division

2.1400. Coroner's Register

The Government Code requires medico-legal death investigative agencies to maintain a Coroner's Register (section 27463) or, in lieu of such a register, official files for each deceased person containing enumerated types of information specific to each case.

The Division maintains individual files in lieu of a register. Further, these files shall be stored electronically for a period identified by the statute. No such files shall be destroyed or retained except at the direction of County Counsel.

2.1656. Division Security

A Division member shall during business hours be present in the lobby.

A record shall be maintained at the front counter listing visitors' names and affiliation, the date of their visits, and the times they entered and left the facility.

Generally, access to the facility by non-Department members shall be restricted to the lobby.

However, employees of other County departments, or contractors for the County, may be allowed access for purposes of maintenance or repair, or for any other reason with the explicit permission of the Commander or his designee.

Mortuary employees may be allowed limited entry into the morgue. These persons may enter no further than is necessary to accomplish the delivery or removal of a decedent.

Persons visiting for a professional purpose, including but not limited to law enforcement agents or attorneys, may be allowed beyond the lobby, but shall be escorted by a Division member, and shall not be left unattended.

No one except personnel assigned to the Division shall enter the morgue without an escort.

The Commander shall ensure sufficient measures are in place to protect employees from harm, and the facility and equipment therein from theft or damage.

Volume 3 OPERATIONS

3.122. Calls for Service

3.122.05 Incoming Calls for Service

Calls for Coroner service are received in two primary ways. The first is by a Division member, generally an Office Assistant assigned to the counter. The public initiates contact with the Division many times during business hours, either by walk-in or by telephone. Generally, the person initiating the contact is seeking either information or service. It is the responsibility of the member to determine the nature of the request.

The member shall, upon determining the request is a call for service, enter a call into the Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD) system. He also may determine that a request for information should be entered as a call for service. However, most requests for information should not be entered into CAD, but should be communicated formally to the appropriate person in a manner determined by the Commander.

The second way of receiving calls for service is through the Department Communications Division (Dispatch), which receives and enters all Division calls for service outside of normal business hours.

3.122.10 Priority of Calls for Service

This section corresponds with section 3.122 of the Department manual.

Just as the volume of calls for law enforcement services at times exceeds the ability of a jurisdiction to respond immediately, so too does the volume of calls for medico-legal death services exceed Division resources. Therefore, requests for Division services must be prioritized.

Generally, calls for Division services are prioritized thus:

Priority 1:

- Law enforcement officers are on scene, regardless of location, with a decedent.

Priority 2:

- Decedents' family members are in the lobby for any purpose unrelated to receiving property.
- Hospital emergency department personnel are reporting a death.
- A law enforcement agent is attempting to obtain additional information or documents needed to close his case.
- A physician requires advice regarding the establishment of cause of death.

Priority 3:

- All other deaths (in-patient, convalescent care, and the like).
- Other medico-legal death investigative agencies request the Division to make death notification on their behalf.

Priority 4:

- Individuals, mortuaries or hospitals, or other government agencies, are requesting information required to complete an official process.

Calls with questions about the status of any case under the jurisdiction of the Division shall be deemed to be a call for information. Although these require official responses, they do not rise to the level of a call for service.

They may be communicated to an appropriate member electronically or in written form. If documentation is required, it may be entered in a case note in the Coroner Case Management System.

3.122.10 Assignment of Calls for Service

Calls for service shall be assigned by the on-duty Supervising Deputy Coroner Investigator. It shall be the responsibility of the Deputy Coroner Investigator receiving the assignment to notify Dispatch of the assignment, and to apprise appropriate Dispatch operator of subsequent changes of location and other significant changes in status.

3.124. Code Three Vehicle Operation

For the purposes of this section, an emergency is deemed to exist, thus allowing the use of lights and sirens, when a decedent lies in such a place or position that the safety of other responders or motorists is in unusual jeopardy.

3.126. Code Three Vehicle Operations: Criteria

Generally, professional staff and volunteers are prohibited from using emergency lights and sirens. Professional staff may, with the explicit permission from the on-duty Supervising Deputy Coroner Investigator, use this equipment only when necessary to safely transport a decedent to the morgue, and then only under the escort of on-duty emergency personnel also displaying activated lights and sirens.

Deputy Coroner Investigators and their supervisors are permitted by the California Vehicle Code (section 21055) to drive with emergency lights and sirens activated when authorized to take enforcement action of a criminal violation, or:

- When responding to a death scene and heavy vehicular traffic is encountered, emergency lighting and siren may be used to facilitate timely arrival. Heavy traffic is defined as vehicular traffic that is stopped or that is traveling at a speed of 20 MPH or less; or,
- To bypass incident or crime scene barricades established by law enforcement.

Employees are required to operate their vehicles with due regard for the safety of the public. Employees may not exceed the speed limit and must obey all traffic signals and controls while responding to a death scene.

Members using emergency lights and sirens shall immediately, or as soon as it is safe, notify the Dispatch center.

3.142. Scene Preservation and Supervision

One of the most important components of a medico-legal death investigation is an examination of the location where the event leading to a person's death began. Law enforcement personnel refer to these locations as crime scenes. However, many deaths investigated by the Division do not involve crimes. Most, in fact, involve other types of deaths. Therefore, medico-legal death investigators are likely to refer to these locations simply as "scenes."

Scene investigations are conducted to protect, gather, and preserve all pertinent material and information that tends to lead to the reliable determination of decedents' cause and manner of death.

Therefore, it is a principal responsibility of Deputy Coroner Investigators to protect the integrity of any scene involved in their investigations.

3.142.15 Scene Photographs and Images

The standards articulated in this section of Department policy, titled "Crime Scene Photographs and Images," shall apply also to Division members photographing scenes as described in section 3.142 of this manual.

Additionally, because photographic documentation of the scene is extremely important, the field training program for Deputy Coroner Investigator shall identify the standards for such photographic documentation.

Photographs shall not be taken as a substitute for thorough field notes.

3.146. Completing Reports

The Division recognizes as its standard for the documentation of death investigations those articulated in the California Peace Officer Standards and Training (POST) Learning Domain 18.

Further, the Commander shall ensure that written guidelines are developed and communicated that, at minimum, identify standards for the organization and presentation of Reports of Death. These guidelines shall be introduced as a component of the field training program for Deputy Coroner Investigators and shall be emphasized as a core component of performance in each investigators' work evaluations.

Information contained in Reports of Death shall include interviews with primary and secondary witness.

Further, Reports of Death often require the inclusion of documentary or forensic elements. Deputy Coroner Investigators shall be responsible for collecting those elements, which include but are not limited to, medical records, biological samples, and law enforcement records.

Deputy Coroner Investigators shall maintain current case records.

3.152.10 Downed Aircraft

Confirmed reports of downed aircraft generally require that a Deputy Coroner Investigator respond as soon as practicable to the scene. Although immediate access to the location of the aircraft and decedents therein or about may be delayed, responding right away allows the investigator the opportunity to collect other information that may accelerate other elements of the investigation. (For example, obtaining a tail number from the aircraft may assist in a more rapid confirmation of the decedents' identity.)

Further, a Supervising Deputy Coroner Investigator should respond to the scene to coordinate with other involved agencies and, if necessary, to establish at the incident command post the Division's presence and intention to participate in decisions affecting its operational interests.

The first Supervising Deputy Coroner Investigator arriving at the scene of a downed aircraft shall represent the Division in all aspects of the investigation until relieved by the Commander or his designee.

3.174.25 Care of Animals: Owner Deceased

Deputy Coroner Investigators shall arrange to protect the welfare of animals in the house or on the grounds of the deceased. If feasible, the animal placed with the decedent's legal next of kin. However, if such a person cannot be identified or contacted, County Animal Control shall be requested to assist with appropriate alternative placement.

3.226.35 Types of Death Reportable to the Coroner

This section of Department policy requires members immediately to notify the Division of all deaths occurring within the Department's jurisdiction.

Government Code section 27491 articulates the types of death that fall under the jurisdiction of county medicolegal death investigative agencies. Although it defines, generally, the coroner's jurisdiction it refrains largely from mandating how specific cases are to be investigated.

The Division recognizes that general guidelines are helpful in determining the classification of deaths the Division shall investigate, and which may be investigated at the discretion of the Commander or his designee. Therefore, the Commander shall develop a document that specifies which types of death the Division shall investigate, and which may be investigated as a matter of discretion. This document shall be always available to Division members.

3.226.45 Death Notifications

The Division will make death notifications on behalf of out-of-county agencies when requested to do so. If higher priority calls prevent a timely response by Coroner personnel, it shall be the discretion of the on-duty Supervising Deputy Coroner Investigator or his designee to hold the call or request further assistance from patrol personnel. That Supervising Deputy Coroner Investigator shall, after receiving concurrence from the affected patrol supervisor, inform the appropriate Dispatch supervisor that patrol will be making the notification.

The Deputy Coroner Investigator shall document thoroughly all efforts made in attempting to make the notification, whether successful or not.

3.226.55 Decedent's Personal Property

Personal property upon or that had been in the constructive control of a decedent shall be removed before the decedent is transported to the Morgue or to a mortuary. Property that shall be secured includes but is not limited to those with real or intrinsic value:

- Wallet or purse;
- Jewelry;
- Cash;
- Bank or credit cards;
- Pictures;
- Weapons;
- Personal papers or documents.

Items of the decedent's estate also may require safekeeping. These include, but are not limited to:

- Vehicles;
- Collections (art, stamps, coins, for example);
- Legal documents;
- Firearms.

In addition to Department requirements for logging and entering property on an approved form or database, and into the Property and Evidence Tracking System (PETS), Deputy Coroner Investigators and supervisors shall complete entries into the Property section of the Coroner Case Management System (CCMS).

3.280. Search Warrants

Generally, Deputy Coroner Investigators serve search warrants to obtain medical records when the custodian of those records is unwilling to submit them as a matter of law.

Division staff shall serve search warrants only during what a medical professional would consider to be normal business hours.

Division staff may not attempt to obtain a search warrant for any other purpose without the expressed approval of the Commander or his designee.

Division staff shall not serve search warrants upon an attorney in his office, except upon review and advice of County Counsel.

3.288. Arsons

Deputy Coroner Investigators shall coordinate with arson investigators on deaths involving the fire of a structure, or in any other death involving fire of suspicious origin.

3.302. Domestic Violence

Government Code section 6254(f)(2)(A) allows the name of a victim of domestic violence or sexual assault to be withheld from the public "at the victim's request, or at the request of the victim's parent or guardian if the victim is a minor." In cases where a qualifying victim has requested confidentiality in the criminal investigatory records, it also shall be redacted from Division records.

The Commander shall ensure that a system is in place that provides for such redaction.

3.310. Child Abuse Investigations

Deputy Coroner Investigators shall closely coordinate with crime investigators to ensure that all information relevant to the determination of cause and manner of death is shared, and to protect against actions that might jeopardize a successful prosecution of offenders.

3.310.15 Interacting with Children and Family Services

Generally, members of the Division are mandated by the Penal Code (sections 11165.7 and 11166) to report incidents of suspected child abuse or child neglect to the local child protective services agency. Therefore, Deputy Coroner Investigators shall report all traumatic or suspicious child deaths to the Department of Children and Family Services. This report shall occur as soon as practicable, but no later than the end of the shift on which the investigation began.

Deputy Coroner Investigators shall attempt concurrently to determine if the child decedent or other children in the household were reported as previous victims of child abuse or neglect. Deputy Coroner Investigators shall document in their reports this contact and all information they may obtain regarding the history of abuse of such children.

Similarly, when indicia of abuse or neglect are discovered during a post-mortem examination, the Forensic Pathologist conducting the examination shall ensure that a supervisor is notified, and that supervisor shall ensure that the Department of Children and Family Services is notified, as previously described.

3.314. Sex Offender Registration

At the end of each calendar month, the Division shall notify each station and police agency in the County of the reported death of sex offenders previously residing within its particular jurisdiction.

3.564. Storing Vehicles

Vehicles found on the private property of a decedent which are susceptible to damage, theft, or misappropriation, and which cannot be released to his next of kin, shall be secured. The vehicles may be towed in a manner determined by the Commander, except when the means exist to secure the vehicles on the property within a lockable structure or other substantially secure enclosure.

Vehicles owned by or under the constructive control of a decedent which are located in a public place shall be towed and stored in accordance with Vehicle Code sections 22651 or 22655, except when a law enforcement agency involved in a parallel investigation will do so. The Division shall submit to the Public Administrator for reimbursement for the costs of towing and storage, payable from the decedent's estate.

3.710. California Coroner Mutual Aid Plan

The State also has developed a system for Coroner Mutual Aid, which mirrors the Law Enforcement Mutual Aid (LEMA) structure. The Sheriff has been designated as the regional coordinator for Coroner Mutual Aid and has invested the responsibility for regional coordination in the Division Commander.

3.1000. Coroner Operations Generally

3.1001. Determining Cause of Death

Cause of death for decedents whose death is investigated by the Division shall be determined by a Forensic Pathologist contracted by the County.

These pathologists may determine causes of death by conducting:

- A full post-mortem examination;
- A partial post-mortem examination;
- An external physical examination;
- A review of both medical records and the Report of Death;
- A review of the Report of Death;
- Certification of a cause of death provided by a patient's primary, attending, or treating physician, to a Deputy Coroner Investigator.

3.1002. Determining Manner of Death

Volume 1 of this annual provides general guidance regarding manner of death.

The Division shall guidelines established by the National Association of Medical examiners in determining manner of death.

The determination of manner of death often can be determined by a Deputy Coroner Investigator. However, the determination of manner of death in cases in which a post-mortem examination is conducted should be made cooperatively, as the Forensic Pathologist conducting the examination and case agent consider the fullness of the information gathered from the field and from the autopsy. In most cases, they will agree, and the manner of death will be determined based on that agreement.

3.1003. Panel Reviews

The Division has established a process that requires a panel to determine manner of death in certain circumstances.

The panel shall review cases for determination of manner of death when:

- The Forensic Pathologist and the case agent cannot reach agreement on the manner;
- The post-mortem examination was conducted, under contract, by another county's forensic pathologists.

The panel comprises the case agent, the Forensic Pathologist that conducted the post-mortem examination, if the examination was conducted by the Division, or the Chief Forensic Pathologist if not; the on-duty Supervising Deputy Coroner Investigator; and, the Supervising Deputy Coroner Investigator II.

The Commander or his designee shall chair the panel to ensure an orderly discussion.

Decisions shall be made by consensus.

The Commander or his designee shall determine manner when the panel cannot reach consensus.

The case agent shall immediately upon conclusion of the review prepare a supplemental report to the case file indicating the date and time the panel convened, and its decision.

Nothing in this section prevents the Commander from requesting the presence of law enforcement investigators whose special knowledge of a case may assist in the determination.

No other persons shall be allowed to attend.

3.1010. Death Certificates

Death certificates in California are completed electronically. The County Department of Public Health has oversight of entries provided by the Division to ensure they are accurate and complete, and that they comply with established protocols for the entry of cause of death.

Deputy Coroner Investigators shall be responsible for signing the death certificates of all cases in which trauma is either the immediate or an underlying cause of death. They shall follow the California Electronic Death Registration System guidelines.

The Commander shall ensure that these guidelines are included in the field training manuals for Deputy Coroner Investigators and other members he shall deem appropriate to assist in the entry process.

Additional costs are incurred when the Coroner Division makes an error on and must correct a Certificate of Death. Personnel shall therefore ensure that all information is correct before attesting to causes of death.

3.1011. Filing Death Certificates and Disposition Permits

Death certificates and disposition permits shall be promptly completed and filed in accordance with statute.

3.1015. Multi-Disciplinary Death Review Teams

County Departments and their partners in government, education, and elsewhere in the community have formed teams to cooperatively review a variety of systems. Generally, the teams review these systems as a means of quality improvement.

The Commander shall ensure the Division is appropriately represented on teams in which it is a requested participant.

The Division commits to representation on the Child Death Review Team (CDRT) and the Elder Death Review Team (EDRT), and any other in which its input is deemed to have value.

3.1020. Child Deaths

3.1020.05 Fetal Deaths

Definition: For the purposes of this section, a fetal death is one where at least one of the following conditions was present:

- The gestation of the fetus was reported as 20 weeks or more;
- The infant was considered by a medical professional as living, regardless of duration. Generally, signs of life in an infant include but are not limited to breathing, beating heart, a pulsating umbilical cord or a movement of voluntary muscles.

The Division shall perform an autopsy when fetal deaths result from other than natural causes.

The Division has no statutory authority to dispose of fetal remains when the manner of death is natural.

3.1020.10 Sudden Infant Death Syndrome

The Government Code (section 27491.41) defines Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) and instructs generally when SIDS should be listed as a cause of death.

The purpose of this policy is to articulate in greater detail how that section shall be applied within the Division.

Definition. Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) is the unexpected death of a child under the age of one year, where the decedent had no known congenital disease, and which is not the result of accident or homicide.

Generally, SIDS is a diagnosis of exclusion. Therefore, when all reasonable causes of death are ruled out, SIDS may be identified as the cause of death. When other reasonable causes remain, SIDS may not be identified as the cause of death. In such cases, the cause of death should be listed as undetermined.

Field Investigations. Deputy Coroner Investigators shall, upon learning of a death about which insufficient initial information exists to rule out SIDS, respond as soon as practicable to the place where the body lies. He shall then investigate in a manner consistent with his training. In cases where the body has been removed from the place where the child was initially found in distress, the investigator also shall respond to that place and investigate in a manner consistent with his training.

Forensic Examinations. The Government Code (section 27491.41) further specifies that, within 24 hours or as soon thereafter as is feasible, an autopsy shall be performed. The Chief Forensic Pathologist shall have the responsibility for scheduling cases where SIDS may have been the cause of death.

The Chief Forensic Pathologist may, at his discretion, accept the determination by an attending physician or surgeon who is licensed that the death is due to SIDS, in accordance with Government Code Section 27491.41 (c) (2).

Reporting Requirements. SIDS deaths shall be reported to the State Department of Health and the SIDS Information Center, or as otherwise prescribed by statute. The form and manner for transmitting this report shall be included in the field training manual for Deputy Coroner Investigators.

3.1025. Public Safety Line of Duty Deaths

For the purposes of this section only, and notwithstanding any other determination made by other government entities, a line of duty death occurs when all the following conditions exist:

- The decedent is recognized by statute as a public safety employee because of his employment by a law enforcement or fire suppression agency.
- The person died on duty; or, off duty in the performance of his official duties.

Deaths are not considered to have occurred in the line of duty when the first condition is met, but when the person was off-duty.

Retired members of public safety organizations cannot be considered on duty, nor to be acting in the performance of their duties. Therefore, they are not considered line of duty deaths, and these procedures shall not apply.

Line of duty deaths shall be investigated and documented in accordance with the protocols established for all other death investigations.

Line of duty deaths are likely to generate interest that might complicate Deputy Coroner Investigators' ability to function unfettered.

Therefore, a Supervising Deputy Coroner Investigator should, whenever possible, respond to the location where the body lies. His primary responsibility there is to prevent access to both the body and the Deputy Coroner Investigator by anyone not involved in the medico-legal or crime investigations. He should work with law enforcement managers, hospital staff, or any other present to ensure the medico-

legal death investigation is unhindered. Finally, he should work to ensure that no information is disseminated inappropriately.

Decedents shall be transported to the Morgue by Division staff using Division vehicles. Contracted drivers shall not transport persons who die in the line of duty.

Generally, line of duty decedents shall be removed privately from transportation vehicles to the Morgue.

The Division has no standing regarding the escort of a line of duty decedent to the Morgue, except to define limits of access to and within the facility.

Escorts of a decedent employed by any agency other than the Department shall be stopped before entering the Division's secure parking lot. No persons from such agencies shall be authorized to enter the secured areas of the facility.

Escorts of a decedent employed by the Department should be stopped before entering the Division's secure parking lot. Department members may be authorized to walk into the lot but shall do so only in an orderly fashion.

3.1030. Military Deaths

Military deaths shall be investigated and documented in accordance with protocols established by the Division, in cooperation with appropriate branches of the United States Department of Defense.

Decedents should be transported by a contractor.

The Division has no standing regarding the escort of a military decedent to the Morgue, except to define limits of access to and within the facility.

Escorts of a military member shall be stopped before entering the Division's secure parking lot. Generally, persons from such agencies shall be authorized to enter the secured areas of the facility. The Commander may authorize the posting of a military honor guard.

3.1035. Organ and Tissue Procurement

3.1035.05 Division's Consent for Procurement

It is the policy of the Department to facilitate the release of cases for organ and tissue recovery pending transplantation, or research, or both, while preserving evidence necessary to determine cause and manner of death, and the circumstances surrounding it.

The Government Code (section 27491.45(B)) authorizes this under the condition that removals are made by a licensed physician or surgeon.

The Division may, at the discretion of one of its Forensic Pathologists, refuse release of a decedent for organ recovery if, in the pathologist's opinion, such a release would interfere with the Division's ability to determine the cause and manner of death.

All cases shall be considered for release, and the decision will be based upon the information available and the relevant circumstances.

The authorized organ and tissue procurement agency asking for the Division's consent is responsible for obtaining all other appropriate permissions to procure organs, or tissue, or both.

To facilitate donation, the Division may assist in locating a decedent's legal next-of-kin, in accordance with the Uniform Anatomical Gift Act (UAGA).

The policy and procedures outlined here shall apply to cases coming under the designation of Standard Criteria for Donation (SCD) and Donation after Cardiac Death (DCD) cases.

3.1035.10 Screening for Organ and Tissue Donors

The Commander and the Chief Forensic Pathologist, in collaboration with the organ and tissue procurement agency, shall develop a written protocol for determining which decedents are candidates for procurement; for ensuring all appropriate safeguards are in place which protect the investigative and forensic interests of the Division; and for communicating and documenting all requests and approvals between the Division and the agency.

3.1040. Requests for Changes of Jurisdiction

The Coroner has jurisdiction over all deaths occurring within the County. However, circumstances sometimes make it desirable for the Division to release jurisdiction to another county. Similarly, circumstances sometimes make it desirable for the Division to request jurisdiction over a death that occurs out of county.

Releasing jurisdiction. Requests to release jurisdiction most often occur when a dying person is transported into San Bernardino County for appropriate medical attention, and then dies while here. These requests are generally made by the coroner of the county where the transportation originated. These requests should be granted when the purpose is to consolidate the death investigation and any crime or other legal investigation within one jurisdiction. All other requests should be denied. Exceptions may be authorized on a case-by-case basis by the Division Commander, or his designee, and the Chief Forensic Pathologist.

Requesting jurisdiction. The Division may request jurisdiction from the coroner of the county where death was pronounced on a person when medical treatment was the sole purpose for his presence there. These requests are most appropriate in cases in which the person died of a known or suspected criminal act, and the purpose is to consolidate the death investigation and any crime or other legal investigation in one jurisdiction.

Jurisdiction shall not be requested when the person died, out of county, after involvement in a lethal force encounter with a Department member.

Documentation of jurisdictional changes. A report shall be prepared on cases in which jurisdiction is released to another agency. This report shall be assigned a Deputy Report number, and shall be entered as an out of county, administrative case.

Cases in which the Division assumes jurisdiction from another agency shall be investigated and documented as if the death had occurred within San Bernardino County.

3.1045. Public Administrator Referrals

3.1045.05 Referrals to the Public Administrator

Cases shall be referred to the Public Administrator for disposition when both of the following conditions are met:

- No person with authority to make disposition, as defined in Health and Safety Code Section 7100, is located.
- It is determined that the decedent had or is believed to have an estate.

3.1045.10 Referrals from the Public Administrator

If, after a diligent search, the Public Administrator determines that no estate exists adequate to pay the cost of a decedent's disposition, it will refer a case to the Division. The Division will then make disposition in a manner consistent with its policies for indigent disposition.

3.2000. Coroner Field Operations

3.2001. Response Times to Death Scenes

It is the goal of the Division to respond to all deaths scenes in which the body lies in a public place, or in which the death was the result of recent trauma, or a criminal act, or unknown suspected natural causes.

Deputy Coroner Investigators promptly shall respond to such scenes.

The on-duty Supervising Deputy Coroner Investigator shall be responsible for identifying cases in which such a response is not required.

3.2002. Permitting Others to Move Decedents

California statute authorizes Coroner personnel in certain circumstances to allow specified agencies to move decedents without a death investigator present. Such requests are made occasionally, most often when the body is in a remote location and the death investigator's response time is extended; or, when the body lies in a position that presents a risk to public safety.

These requests shall be made directly to the on-duty Supervising Deputy Coroner Investigator, and only he may grant or deny them.

The supervisor, as a condition of approving such a request, shall require that appropriate photographs are taken by emergency personnel on scene, and that those are promptly transmitted to the Coroner Division for inclusion in the investigative report.

Both the request and the supervisor's determination shall be documented in the investigative report.

3.2003. Recovery Team

3.2003.05 Preamble

In most instances, the removal of a decedent from the scene of his death is accomplished routinely by a transportation driver with assistance if needed from the Deputy Coroner Investigator assigned to the case.

However, some death scenes are extraordinary, requiring a broader approach to reaching decedents for examination and documentation, and for body removal.

To ensure that such investigations are accomplished both thoroughly and safely, the Division designates a specialized team to accomplish those ends.

3.2003.10 Purposes for Recovery Team Deployment

The Recovery Team should be deployed to investigate where technical training or expertise is required to reach, examine, or recover decedents from; or, to document the place the body lies.

The team, or some members thereof, also may be deployed to deaths scenes where timely processing multiple decedents requires more than a single investigator.

The Division also may deploy individual team members to lead groups of outside investigators assigned to provide mutual aid.

3.2003.15 Composition of Recovery Team

The Supervising Deputy Coroner II is designated as the team manager. He may respond to scenes on a case-by-case basis, but generally is expected to coordinate the team response from the Division office, or from a command post.

A Supervising Deputy Coroner I shall be designated as the team supervisor and is expected to provide in-field supervision. Generally, he shall oversee the team's field work, but should not become involved in the technical work itself.

The Commander shall assign no fewer than three Deputy Coroner Investigators to the team. They shall be responsible for the field work

The Commander may, in the most extraordinary circumstances, deploy properly trained Autopsy Assistants or Division volunteers with the team.

A forensic anthropologist under contract with the County also is considered a Recovery Team member. However, he may not be required to respond in all circumstances.

3.2003.20 Recovery Team: Minimum Training

Team members at minimum should be trained in basic search and rescue operations, working in confined spaces, the technical aspects using ropes and related equipment to climb and repel.

3.2010. Institutional Deaths

Definition. For the purposes of this section, institutional deaths are those in which decedents, immediately prior to their deaths, resided in or were wards of any detention facility operated by, or for, any federal, state, or other government agency other than the County.

Mandatory Investigation. The Division shall investigate all institutional deaths and document all relevant information in an investigative report.

Administrative Records. The expenses related to institutional death investigations may be recoverable. Therefore, investigators shall record on an interoffice memorandum all mileage driven during the investigation. The Commander also shall ensure that similar memoranda are written documenting the date and duration of any autopsy conducted on these decedents.

Disposition of Property. The institution may maintain possession of personal property and release such to the next of kin. Deputy Coroner Investigators shall include in their investigative reports a description of any property left with the institution. This amplifies Department policy section 3.226.55.

3.2011. In-Custody Deaths

This policy amplifies, for purposes of the Division, Department policy section 3.228.

Definition. For the purpose of this section, an in-custody death is one in which a special relationship existed between the law enforcement agency and the decedent at the time of his death. In-custody deaths shall always include those that occur when a person had been detained in a Department detention facility, jail ward, or other similar place of confinement. In-custody deaths also may include those that occur during a Lethal Force Encounter (LFE), or during or shortly after the conclusion of a pursuit. The Commander or his designee may determine that deaths occurring during other law-enforcement activities should be identified as an in-custody.

The principle application of this definition is intended for the Department but also should be used as a guideline for deaths involving other law enforcement agencies.

Mandatory Investigation.

Field. The Division shall investigate all in-custody deaths and document all relevant information in an investigative report. Deputy Coroner Investigators shall personally assess all sites involved in the incident. Watch commanders on a case-by-case basis may exempt investigators from this requirement.

Autopsies. The County maintains a contract to ensure that autopsies on persons who die in any of the circumstances described in Section 3005 of this volume are performed by another agency.

The purpose of the contract autopsy is to mitigate the perception of bias. That agency shall determine cause of death. The Division shall determine manner.

The Division in all in-custody deaths not involving the Department shall have discretion to determine the necessity of autopsies.

Administrative Actions. The Commander or his designee shall ensure that in-custody deaths are reported to the State of California, in a manner prescribed by the Department of Justice.

3.2015. Unclaimed Persons

3.2015.01 Preamble

It is the Division's obligation to attempt to identify each decedent whose death falls under its statutory jurisdiction, and then to attempt to locate a person within the decedents line of kinship with a legal obligation to arrange for his disposition (Health and Safety Code section 7100).

Occasionally, decedents remain unclaimed for some period, thus additional action by the Division is required. Unclaimed persons are most often the result of:

- An inability, after diligent efforts, to confirm the decedent's identity. (These are called unidentified persons.); or,

- An inability to secure resources, either from the decedent’s estate or from someone with the legal obligation to make disposition, for his burial. (These are called indigent persons.); or,
- An unwillingness of a person with a legal obligation to make disposition to fulfill that obligation. (These are called abandoned persons.)

Release of Unclaimed Persons. Occasionally, persons without a legal responsibility to make disposition of an indigent will offer to do so. The Commander may accept such an offer.

Generally:

Non-family members may not authorize cremation. This is to preserve the ability for a family member, subsequently identified, to reclaim the decedent for disposition at his discretion. (This presumes such person has legal standing to act in this capacity.) Non-family members or interested parties who wish to make the final arrangements shall submit a letter to the Commander specifically stating their intentions and their financial ability to pay for such disposition.

Non-family members or other interested parties shall pay for a burial or cremation as permitted and authorized by the Commander. They:

- May designate a cemetery of their choice.
- May designate a crematory of their choice.
- Shall not retain possession of cremated remains. Rather, they shall be buried.
- Shall pay all fees for requested services to the identified mortuary, cemetery or crematory (or both), before interment.
- Shall not be permitted to authorize exhumation.

In any event, jurisdiction remains with the Department.

3.2015.02 Cremation

The Division, when acting in the absence of a party with the legal responsibility to make disposition, may authorize the cremation of indigent decedents. However, unidentified persons shall not be cremated.

3.2015.05 Indigent Decedents

Decedents shall not be released, or cremated at County expense, until a diligent search for their legal next of kin, or a person identified in Health and Safety Code 7100 (and following subsections) has been conducted. It shall be the case agent’s responsibility to conduct such a search.

Persons located during this search who have the legal right to make disposition shall be advised of their responsibility to do so. The case agent shall prepare a supplemental report documenting his search efforts and their results.

Persons once advised of their responsibility to act generally respond by accepting that responsibility, or by asserting an inability or unwillingness to make disposition. The case agent shall advise those willing to act of the appropriate steps to ensure timely and legal disposition occurs. The case agent shall advise those unwilling or unable to make disposition that California statute authorizes legal penalties for failing to do so. The case agent also shall document these responses in his report.

Cases in which no person is located with the legal responsibility to make disposition, and those in which that person cannot or will not do so, shall be forwarded to the Indigent Burial Specialist for further processing.

The Commander shall establish a process directing the manner in which such cases are forwarded to the Indigent Burial Specialist, and the forms or communication methods used to do so.

3.2015.06 Processing Indigent Decedents

Generally, deceased indigents shall be cremated. However, veterans of the United States military eligible for burial in a national cemetery, unidentified persons, and decedents who prior to death owned burial plots and paid the appropriate opening and closing fees, shall be buried.

Generally, the County will bear the costs associated with disposition of deceased indigents who immediately prior to death resided in the County. For the purposes of this section, "resided in" means the decedent made his permanent habitation in a residential dwelling, either owned or rented, at the time of his death. Hospitals, long-term care facilities, convalescent homes and such other facilities should be excluded from consideration in the determination of residency.

The Division may be required, under specified conditions, to take possession of a decedent's remains, and appropriately to inter them. Further, the County shall bear the expenses for such disposition. (California Government Code section 7104).

The Division should attempt to recover those costs from a person later determined to have a legal responsibility for disposition. (California Government Code section 7104.1)

The Commander shall develop procedures detailing the methods for investigating a decedent's indigent status, county of residence, and the existence of persons who may have a legal responsibility to make disposition. He shall further ensure that the procedures include the methods for recovering fees so collected. The Commander further shall ensure that these procedures are reviewed at least once annually. He shall verify in writing that the review occurred and shall note any changes made as a result.

3.2015.07 Disposition of Indigent Cremains

The Coroner Division shall obtain the necessary permits and complete the death certificate to include medical certification. From time to time, a mortuary under contract with the County may be required to perform this function. Such mortuary may be responsible for temporarily holding the remains in its refrigeration facility and, when requested, to deliver the remains to the designated crematory, as provided by law.

Prior to the disposition of the remains by cremation, the Indigent Burial Specialist shall ensure that the decedent has been positively identified.

The Commander shall ensure that a manual detailing the specific procedures for disposition of indigent cremains exists and is periodically reviewed for completeness.

3.2015.10 Unidentified Decedents

The Division investigates a number of deaths each year in which the identity of the decedent is unknown. In most cases, the identity of decedents is unknown. For most of those cases, decedents are positively identified within a few hours.

It is the responsibility of the Deputy Coroner Investigator to positively identify each decedent. In the initial stages of an investigation, circumstances may give an indication of the decedent's identity, but not to a point of confidence based on forensic or circumstantial information. In these early stages, it is not necessary to name the decedent, nor to classify him as unidentified.

For purposes of this section, these shall not be considered unidentified persons.

Deputy Coroner Investigators shall make diligent efforts to identify a decedent based on forensic or circumstantial information.

It is not uncommon, however, for this to take several days. The point in the investigation at which a person will be designated as unidentified shall be the discretion of the Deputy Coroner Investigator.

When the investigator reaches a point in the investigation at which he believes identification is unlikely without extraordinary efforts, he shall designate the decedent as "John Doe" if the decedent is male, "Jane Doe" if the decedent is female, or "Undetermined Doe" if the decedent's sex cannot be immediately determined.

A numeric designator shall be affixed to the end of the name.

3.2015.20 Skeletal Recoveries

The investigation, recovery and documentation of skeletal remains or a burial site are complex and time-consuming processes. Nonetheless, the Division has jurisdiction over such scenes. Law enforcement agencies may assume concurrent jurisdiction when it is determined that the decedent died as a result of known or suspected criminal behavior. Deputy Coroner Investigators shall cooperate with law enforcement investigators to ensure the needs of both entities are served.

Deputy Coroner Investigators shall consult a forensic anthropologist to ensure, at a minimum, that bones are human. Forensic anthropologists shall be consulted further, when needed, to determine gender, age, and race. Generally, a forensic anthropologist should be involved in autopsies to provide additional information that may assist in positive identification.

3.2020. Unidentified Persons Team

This team shall assume primary responsibility for identification over a long term. At a minimum, this shall include ensuring the timely submission of fingerprints, dental x-rays and DNA to the appropriate State and Federal entities.

The team shall centralize case files in a separate archive and coordinate further long-term efforts for identification. The team may require that the primary investigator perform follow-up investigation as necessary.

The team shall comprise, at minimum, three members of the Division, assigned by the Commander.

3.2021. Forensic Pathologists to Death Scenes

From time to time, it is desirable for a forensic pathologist to attend a death scene. Therefore, after consultation with the case agent, the on-duty Supervising Deputy Coroner Investigator may request that the on-call Forensic Pathologist, on duty or after hours, respond. The on-call Forensic Pathologist should be notified in cases including but not limited to those wherein:

- The circumstances cannot be adequately explained or interpreted based on gross observations alone, and when a medical perspective will likely lead to a proper understanding of the occurrences leading up to the death.
- Personal viewing of the death scene will provide a superior context for the Forensic Pathologist at autopsy.

The on-call Forensic Pathologist has final authority for determining if a response to the scene is necessary.

3.2022. Chaplain Services

Chaplain services are available and may be requested by a Deputy Coroner Investigator or a Supervisor from the Volunteer Forces Unit of the Emergency Operations Division. Chaplains will be under the supervision of the Deputy Coroner Investigator requesting their services.

3.2025. Transporting Decedents

3.2025.05 Transportation Drivers

The duties of transport drivers generally are defined by a contract between their employers and the County. Transport drivers may assist Deputy Coroner Investigators on scene by moving bodies at the direction of the investigator, or by rolling a body to facilitate a thorough examination. However, Deputy Coroner Investigators shall not delegate any of their principal duties.

3.2025.10 Body Identification Tags, Body Pouches, Security Locks Required

Decedents being removed to the Morgue shall have a body identification (toe) tag affixed to the right great toe, or to the largest portion of the remains, when the right great toe is missing. Decedents being removed to the Morgue shall be transported in a body pouch, which shall be secured with an approved lock. Finally, the decedent's name and the investigative report number shall be written on the exterior of the body pouch.

The Commander shall ensure that field training manuals for Deputy Coroner Investigators include instruction on the process for transporting decedents.

3.2025.15 Transportation for Post-Mortem Examination

The Morgue shall be the central repository for decedents requiring an autopsy. Generally, decedents should not be transported to the Morgue facility unless required for autopsy.

3.2025.20 Transportation for Other Purposes

Decedents in non-Coroner cases originating at a hospital or care facility may be transported to the Morgue when all of the following conditions are met:

- The decedent has been appropriately identified; or, to facilitate appropriate identification;
- Causes of death have been certified;
- No person authorized by Health and Safety Code Section 7100 can or will act to make disposition.

3.2025.25. Decedents Presenting Extraordinary Hazards

The on-duty Supervising Deputy Coroner Investigator, or Morgue supervisor, shall determine whether to have transported to the Morgue any decedent who, because of known or suspected highly-contagious disease or other extraordinary hazard may present a danger to staff.

Supervisors authorizing transport of such decedents shall ensure that all Division staff and contractors likely to come into contact with them are notified.

3.3000. Coroner Morgue Operations

3.3001. Morgue Security

Generally, entry into the Morgue shall be restricted to Department members assigned to the Division. However, certain exceptions exist:

- Members of the Department or other law enforcement agencies with the right and need to observe autopsies where criminal behavior is suspected.
- Transportation drivers who have received prior clearance from the Division.
- Mortuary employees in the performance of their duties.
- Students whose course of study is required by their program, or whose research may be enhanced by the observation of autopsies.
- Others with the expressed permission of the Commander or his designee and the Chief Forensic Pathologist.

Transportation drivers and mortuary employees shall not enter the autopsy suite. They shall be allowed into the Morgue only to the degree required to accomplish delivery or removal.

All persons permitted Morgue access under one of these exceptions shall enter their names, phone numbers, and purpose of entry in a log (either electronic or written) maintained at the front counter of the Division. The log also shall include the date and time of their entry into and exit from the Morgue.

No person permitted Morgue access under one of these exceptions shall be permitted into the Morgue unless accompanied by a Division member.

3.3002. Bio-Hazard Protective Measures

The Commander shall establish areas of the facility deemed to be either "HOT" (high likelihood of exposure to bloodborne pathogens, or other dangerous contaminants), "WARM" (moderate likelihood of exposure to bloodborne pathogens, or other dangerous contaminants), or "COOL" (low likelihood of exposure to bloodborne pathogens or other dangerous contaminants).

Persons entering into HOT zones shall don personal protective equipment (PPE) in accordance with regulations issued by the State Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), or by County policy, whichever is more restrictive.

Prior to entering a WARM zone from a HOT zone, all PPE shall be removed in accordance with the above regulations.

Persons entering a COOL zone from a WARM zone should exercise care to avoid inadvertently introducing biohazardous or other similar contaminants into the COOL zone.

3.3003. Receiving Decedents

The Division member receiving decedents into the morgue shall enter all available information into the Coroner Case Management System (CCMS) to ensure proper body tracking.

In cases where a decedent's name already in CCMS differs from what appears on the toe tag or body bag, the name on the toe tag or body bag shall be entered as an alias.

Occasionally, the Division will request that a mortuary bring a decedent to the Morgue because he is indigent or needs to be autopsied. In these cases, the Division member receiving the body shall affix a toe tag using the decedent's presumed name. The on-duty Supervising Deputy Coroner Investigator shall be contacted and shall ensure that efforts to identify the decedent forensically are initiated.

Decedents are sometimes brought to the Morgue solely to accommodate the withdrawal of toxicology samples. These decedents shall not be received into the Morgue for ongoing storage and shall be released back to the mortuary immediately after the samples are drawn. No efforts are then required to identify these decedents.

Unidentified decedents shall not be released, except for burial by the Division as an unidentified person.

3.3003.01 Disposition of Items Found on Decedents

Members shall, upon locating items of personal property or evidence upon a decedent being processed, immediately cease all activities with the body, and without delay notify the on-duty Supervising Deputy Coroner Investigator. Items determined by the supervisor to be personal property shall be secured as directed in Volume 5 of this manual. Items believed to be evidence shall be temporarily secured by the supervisor. Contact shall be made with the involved law enforcement agency, and the item shall be released as soon as practicable to that agency.

3.3003.05 Transport Call Sheets

Transportation call sheets, sometimes known as run sheets, serve to validate billing invoices provided by contractors to the Division. It shall be the responsibility of the member receiving decedents in the Morgue to ensure that personnel employed by the transportation contractor have accurately completed sections of the sheet regarding times of notification, departure for and arrival at the death scene; names of employees making the removal; and, the location of the body prior to removal. The Division member receiving the body shall take possession of the call sheet and shall then enter on it all other appropriate information required for accurate body tracking, and subsequent payment of invoices

The member receiving the body shall then deposit the sheet in a location determined by a supervisor.

3.3004. Storage of Homicide or Suspected Homicide Victims

The storage of decedents who were victims, or who are suspected victims, of homicides requires great care and management, primarily to protect those decedents of further physical injury and to mitigate the possibility of disruption or cross contamination of evidence.

Therefore, these decedents shall be placed on morgue carriers that shall not come into contact with other remains.

Further, care must be taken in such cases to ensure proper handling of forensic samples and medical records.

Therefore, the receiving member shall enter any toxicology samples obtained into the Morgue specimen log book upon arrival and complete the requested information on the specimen log sheet. The receiving member shall then place the samples in a tamper-proof bag and immediately place them into a container designated for their storage. Finally, the receiving member shall place medical records and transportation run sheets in a location designated for these documents.

3.3005. Autopsies

3.3005.05 Referrals to Forensic Pathologists

The Chief Forensic Pathologist or his designee shall review each Report of Death submitted to pathology. A Forensic Pathologist shall have the discretion to certify the cause of death or perform an autopsy.

3.3005.10 Cases Requiring Autopsies

The Chief Forensic Pathologist in collaboration with the Commander shall establish general guidelines to determine the types of cases that generally require an autopsy.

3.3005.15 Family Requests for No Autopsy

Generally, persons identified by Health and Safety Code Section 7100 as a person with primary disposition authority may ask that no autopsy be performed on his family member. The Commander or his designee, after consultation with the Chief Forensic Pathologist, shall have authority to grant or to deny such requests.

3.3005.20 Certificates of Religious Belief

Government Code section 27491.43, and following subsections, define a process by which certain post-mortem examinations may be prevented based on a decedent's religious beliefs. The Division commits to follow the processes the statutes require, and therefore has no need to reiterate them in this manual.

To ensure compliance, the Commander shall develop procedures for compliance, and shall document them on an Interoffice Memorandum. He shall review the document annually, or upon amendments to the statute. He shall upon review place the memorandum in a file for training and historical reference.

3.3005.25 Requests for Private Autopsy

Statute provides that certain family members may request a private autopsy. The request shall be submitted in writing and shall state the relationship of the person making the request to the decedent. Upon presentation of this request and a certified check in an amount established by County policy, the Chief Forensic Pathologist shall schedule an autopsy. It shall be the responsibility of the Supervising Deputy Coroner Investigator II to notify families of the schedule, and of their obligation to arrange to have the body transported to the Morgue at the time of the autopsy and removed from the Morgue at the completion of the procedure.

Certificates of Death issued by jurisdictions outside the County shall stand.

Certificates of Death issued in the County and generated by an attending physician shall remain unchanged unless the results of the private autopsy indicate otherwise.

The person that requested the private autopsy shall receive the completed Autopsy Protocol with no additional charge.

3.3005.30 Private Autopsies by Hospitals

Private pathologists who, during an autopsy, discover trauma or suspicious circumstances are likely to contact the Division to report their findings. Calls of this nature should be referred immediately to a Division Forensic Pathologist. The Division's Forensic Pathologist then shall make one of two determinations. One of those determinations is that the private pathologist may continue his examination and prepare a written report that shall be forwarded to the Division. The other determination is that the procedure must be stopped immediately, and that the body and all specimens, including the placenta, where present, shall be transported immediately to the Division.

3.3005.35 Autopsy and Assessment Processing

Several processes occur prior to and during an actual post-mortem examination. These include but are not limited to taking photographs for documentation and collecting body specimens.

The Chief Forensic Pathologist shall ensure that the various methods for documenting autopsies and assessments is included in the Field Training Manual for Autopsy Assistants.

He shall similarly ensure that processes for creating labels for specimen containers, labeling such container, and properly refrigerating them shall be included in that field training manual.

It shall be the responsibility of the morgue supervisor, or, in his absence, the on-duty Supervising Deputy Coroner Investigator, to ensure compliance with these methods.

3.3005.40 Witness to Autopsy

The Morgue shall be considered a forensic facility. As such, it must be protected from contamination. Further, the identities of decedents that may have been crime victims also must be protected. Therefore, requests to view decedents, including their autopsies, shall be denied.

3.3005.45 Photographs within the Morgue

Photographs in the Morgue shall be taken only:

- By Division members documenting an autopsy or assessment.
- By law enforcement personnel collecting evidence at autopsy.
- To comply with a valid court order.

3.3006. X-Rays

X-Rays are an integral source of information in post-mortem forensic examinations. The Division is committed to maintaining imaging equipment that streamlines the X-Ray process, protects staff from unnecessary exposure to radiation, and provides top-quality images for review in the examination process.

3.3006.05 Operation of Imaging Equipment

Imaging equipment may be operated only by persons specifically trained to do so.

Autopsy assistants and other members assigned to work in or near imaging equipment shall wear personally issued film badges provided by the Arrowhead Regional Medical Center. The badges shall be exchanged at the end of each month.

Images may not be taken for personal purposes.

3.3006.10 Retention of Images

Images shall not be destroyed. They shall be maintained in a manner that extends their usability as long as is possible within the constraints of current technology.

3.3007. Embalming

Although authorized by statute to do so, the Division does not embalm decedents.

3.3008. Blood and Tissue Samples

3.3008.05 Retention of Samples

Blood and tissue, regardless of the manner preserved, shall be maintained in a manner that reflects best practices within the field.

Blood samples shall be maintained at least one year.

Tissue preserved on glass slides, or on photographic media; fixed tissue samples; and vitreous humid fluid shall be maintained at least five years.

Samples may be maintained longer, or destroyed sooner, in compliance with a valid court order.

3.3008.10 Releasing Samples

The Division shall release body tissue and fluids only under court order.

A copy of the court order shall be made a part of the investigative file and shall be considered part of the official record.

3.3009. Special Requests

3.3009.05 Special Blood or Tissue Screening

Occasionally, the Division receives requests to have blood or tissue specially tested.

Requests originating from other public safety agencies shall be answered affirmatively. The sample to be tested shall be forwarded to the County Public Health Department, along with the name of the agency making the request. Test results are not a matter for Division attention, and it is presumed that Public Health personnel will report their finding directly to the requestor.

Requests originating from a private party may be granted at the discretion of the Chief Forensic Pathologist. Blood or tissue to be tested pursuant to this type of request shall be transferred from the Division directly to a laboratory. No samples shall be released to a private person for transportation.

3.3009.10 Post-Mortem Surgical Procedures

Requests for post-mortem surgical procedures shall not be granted.

3.3010. Releasing Decedents

Decedents shall be released only under the following conditions:

- They have been positively identified.
- Post-mortem examinations have been completed.
- A person in the line of kinship described in Health and Safety Code section 7100 has chosen a mortuary and otherwise arranged for disposition.
- The decedent has been determined through internal processes to be indigent or otherwise unclaimed.

VOLUME 4. FORMS

4.1001. Reporting

Reports of Investigation, also known as Death Investigations or investigative reports, are created in a paperless format that, generally, is field based rather than form based.

However, some forms are appropriate and are required nonetheless to comply with Department policy or statutory mandates.

Forms required by the Department, or by statute or regulation are not addressed in this manual.

4.1010. General Coroner Forms

4.1010.05 Order of Release

This form is used by a person with the right to control a decedent's disposition to authorize the decedent's release from the division. (Cor-Gen-01)

4.1010.10 Transportation Call Sheet

This form documents a case related to transportation of decedents. It is a basis for confirming billing of the County by a transportation contractor. (Cor-Gen-02)

4.1010.15 Certification of No Records

This is a response, required by the Evidence Code (section 1561), to a legal demand for records. It certifies that the Division does not possess the records sought. (Cor-Clr-01)

4.1010.20 Declaration of Custodian of Records

This is a response, required by the Evidence Code (section 1561), to a legal demand for records. It certifies, among other things, that the Division provided the records sought. (Cor-Clr-02)

4.1010.25 DNA Request Form

The Division requires this form as the means the decedent's legal next of kin requests samples, for further laboratory testing, of the decedent's DNA. (Cor-Clr-03)

4.1010.30 Document Request

This is the formal means of requesting documents in the Division's custody. (Cor-Clr-04)

4.1010.35 Certification of Documents

This form accompanies documents produced or delivered as formally requested, and certifies they are full, true and correct. (Cor-Clr-05)

4.2010 Coroner Investigative Forms

4.2010.05 Report of Death Worksheet

This form is to be used to document a death investigation if the Coroner Case Management System, an electronic database, is unavailable. (Cor-Inv-01)

4.2010.10 Comparative Identification Worksheet

This form is to be used as a supplemental to the report of death worksheet. (Cor-Inv-02)

4.2010.15 Coroner's Identification

This is an attestation by family to support circumstantial identification of a decedent. (Cor-Inv-03)

4.2010.20 Fax Request for Medical Records

This is a simple, informal request, as titled. (Cor-Inv-04)

4.2010.25 Coroner Subpoena

This is a legal demand for records, served by the Division under authority of Government Code Section 27498. (Cor-Inv-05)

4.2010.30 Death Certificate Worksheet

This is a form that standardizes from a decedent's primary medical doctor his opinion, for certification, of cause(s) of death. (Cor-Inv-06)

4.2010.35 Statement of Medical Findings

This form is a statement of preliminary medical findings. Its primary use is to facilitate transportation across international borders the body of foreign nationals. (Cor-Inv-07)

4.2010.40 Authorization for Destruction of Weapon

This is an authorization from a decedent's legal next of kin for the destruction of a weapon taken for safekeeping. (Cor-Inv-08)

4.2010.45 Referral to the Public Administrator

This is a formal method of informing the Public Administrator of the death of person whose estate may fall under its jurisdiction. (Cor-Inv-09)

4.3010. Morgue Forms

4.3010.05 Identification of Remains

This form is a mortuary's representation of a decedent's identification. The Division requires this form as a means of circumstantially identifying decedents, in certain circumstances. (Cor-Mrg-01)

4.3010.10 Specimen Chain of Custody Form

This form documents the chain of custody of forensic specimens transported to the Morgue from a hospital. (Cor-Mrg-02)

VOLUME 5. PROPERTY AND EVIDENCE

5.110. Property Types

For the purposes of this section, the Division does not seize evidence, nor accept found property. All property secured by the Division shall be for safekeeping.

5.305. Responsibility of Division Personnel

Notwithstanding all other sections of Department policy, Division members are further guided as follows:

Property taken for safekeeping shall be inventoried on a Department-approved form or database, and subsequently secured without unreasonable delay in the Division property room.

No property taken from a decedent shall be left unattended or stored temporarily anywhere in a Deputy Coroner Investigator's desk or other unsecured area in the office.

Property shall not be stored or left unattended in a Division vehicle except during an investigation. Deputy Coroner Investigators upon returning to the Division from an investigation immediately shall tag and place property in the Division property room.

Coin collections or rare currency shall be handled separately from general currency and treated as personal property.

Firearms shall be rendered safe prior to transport, tagged, stored and locked in the Division property room.

5.322. Processing Controlled Substances

Deputy Coroner Investigators shall not remove from the place where decedents are located controlled substances, whether they are therapeutic or drugs of abuse. Controlled substances located on a decedent's person shall be transmitted to law enforcement personnel onscene. Controlled substances located in the Morgue while processing decedents shall be transmitted personally to a law enforcement agent attending the procedure. If no such person is present when the substance is located, the agency shall be notified to take immediate possession. An agency unable or unwilling to do so shall be informed that the substance will be marked for destruction according to Department policy. Either the Division property officer or his back up shall be notified. He shall then package the substance appropriately, and transport it without delay to the Sheriff's Crime Lab for destruction.

5.3001. Foreign Objects Recovered at Autopsy

Foreign objects recovered from decedents while being processed in the Morgue shall be transmitted personally to a law enforcement agent attending the procedure. If no such person is present when the object is located, the agency shall be notified to take immediate possession. An agency unable or unwilling to do so shall be informed that the object will be placed into safekeeping at the Division. Either the Division property officer or his back up shall be notified. He shall then package the object appropriately and place it into a secure property locker at the Division. The property officer then shall coordinate with a representative of the law enforcement agency to facilitate its release. The on-duty Supervising Deputy Coroner Investigator shall be notified if the object remains in safekeeping beyond the time allowable by Department policy.

5.3002. Personal Property Recovered in the Morgue

Autopsy Assistants shall have primary responsibility for securing items of decedents' personal property believed to have real or intrinsic value located and recovered while processing bodies.

Items of such personal property located by other members shall be drawn to the attention of the Autopsy Assistant assigned to process the body on which the property was located.

Once in possession of the items, the assistant shall inventory and list in the Property module of the Coroner Case Management System, and on a Department required form or database. He shall then give it to the Division property officer for proper packaging and storage.

Generally clothing may be processed differently. It shall be removed from the body by the Autopsy Assistant and placed into a biohazard bag. This bag shall be kept with the body and released with the body to a mortuary.

A Clothing Inventory Form shall be completed. The bag shall be released to a mortuary representative only after he signs the form.

The clothing and property of homicide victims shall be removed and inventoried only by the Forensic Pathologist conducting the post-mortem examination.

Clothing or property that is evidence shall not be released to law enforcement officers until they have signed the property Department forms or otherwise acknowledged receipt.

VOLUME 6. UNIFORMS

6.440. Class E Uniform

Department policy in this section authorizes Deputy Coroner Investigators and their supervisors to wear as an alternative to the standard Class A uniform or professional business attire the Class E uniform. The components of this uniform are described in subsequent sections. The Department gives the Commander or his designee the discretion to determine when this uniform is authorized.

Generally, the conditions and circumstances in which the Class E may be worn, and similarly when it may not be, are outlined as follows:

The Class E is a utility uniform and, therefore, shall not be worn in the performance of routine duties. It shall not become a common alternative to professional business attire or a Class A. Because it is a utility uniform, the Class E shall be worn only with specific authorization by the on-duty Supervising Deputy Coroner Investigator (or designated shift supervisor), who, after considering each situation case-by-case, deems it necessary to achieve at least one of the purposes articulated in the following paragraph.

The Class E uniform is intended to establish the presence of Coroner personnel at scenes likely to involve the implementation of the incident command system and its derivatives; to communicate by sight the authority of individuals, in large-scale or complex investigations, to take certain actions; and, to enhance the overall professionalism of the division.

Examples requiring the authorization of the Class E uniform include, but are not limited to:

- In-field training, including firearms and use of force qualification.
- Responses to requests for out-of-county mutual aid.
- Responses to multiple-fatality events likely to involve multiple agencies and multiple first responders and investigators.
- Team deployments. (For the purposes of this section only, a team is defined as three or more members responding to the same location for the same event.)
- Deployments into confined spaces; other difficult environments (such as those significantly affected by flooding or fire); areas accessible only by crossing unusually difficult terrain, or by hiking into remote locations; and, those requiring aerial insertions or removals.
- Situations which, by their nature, are likely to substantially diminish the professional appearance of business attire or a Class A. Examples include exposure to unusual amounts of bodily fluids; hoarder houses; or, significant inclement weather, including excessive heat, or heavy rain or snowfall, or the presence of accumulated snow or ice.

On-duty Supervising Deputy Coroner Investigators (or designated shift supervisors) may, after considering each situation case-by-case, permit an investigator once in the Class E uniform to remain so, provided that the investigator has already completed more than half of his shift, and that he will not have any further public contact due to the ongoing nature of the originating case.

6.440.10 Class E Shirt

Generally, the on-duty Supervising Deputy Coroner Investigator, after considering the circumstances of each case, shall have the discretion to authorize which Class E shirt shall be worn. He shall make every

effort to ensure that each person deploying to a single event is wearing the same style shirt, and that the sleeve length (long or short) is the same.

6.440.20 Class E Name Tag

Safety members shall select the appropriate job title from these authorized options:

- Captain
- Lieutenant
- Lead Supervisor
- Supervisor
- Investigator

6.515.00 Class 2 Uniform

Generally, Autopsy Assistants while on duty shall wear professional business attire, as described in Department Policy [Section 6.230] or medical or surgical “scrubs” provided by the Division.

The Class 2 is a utility uniform and, therefore, shall not be worn in the performance of routine duties. It shall not become a common alternative to professional business attire or scrubs. Because it is a utility uniform, the Class 2 shall be worn only with specific authorization by the on-duty Supervising Deputy Coroner Investigator (or designated shift supervisor), who, after considering each situation case-by-case, deems it necessary to achieve at least one of the purposes articulated in the following paragraph.

The Class 2 uniform is intended to establish the presence of Coroner personnel at scenes likely to involve the implementation of the incident command system and its derivatives; to communicate by sight the authority of individuals, in large-scale or complex investigations, to take certain actions; and, to enhance the overall professionalism of the division.

Examples requiring the authorization of the Class 2 uniform include, but are not limited to:

- In-field training.
- Responses to requests for out-of-county mutual aid.
- Responses to multiple-fatality events likely to involve multiple agencies and multiple first responders and investigators.
- Team deployments. (For the purposes of this section only, a team is defined as three or more members responding to the same location for the same event.)
- Deployments into confined spaces; other difficult environments (such as those significantly affected by flooding or fire); areas accessible only by crossing unusually difficult terrain, or by hiking into remote locations; and, those requiring aerial insertions or removals.
- Situations which, by their nature, are likely to substantially diminish the professional appearance of business attire. Examples include exposure to unusual amounts of bodily fluids; hoarder houses; or, significant inclement weather, including excessive heat, or heavy rain or snowfall, or the presence of accumulated snow or ice.

JOB TITLE:

The authorized job title for use on this uniform is Autopsy Asst.

VOLUME 7. VOLUNTEERS

7.100. Preamble

A Coroner Citizen Volunteer program has been established as authorized by Department policy. It is operated in accordance with Volume 7 of the Department manual.

Chaplain services are available and may be requested from the Volunteer Forces Unit of the Emergency Operations Division by a Deputy Coroner Investigator or a Supervising Deputy Coroner Investigator. Chaplains will be under the supervision of the Deputy Coroner Investigator requesting their services.

7.120. Volunteer Unit Inspections

At least twice annually, the Lieutenant shall inspect all unit equipment and administrative files, and shall document his findings on a Interoffice Memorandum to the Division Commander. This shall be in addition to inspections unit coordinators may make.

7.122. Record of Volunteer Duties

The monthly report required by this section of Department policy to be forwarded to the Volunteer Forces unit also shall be submitted for review to the Division Commander and Lieutenant.

7.123. Volunteer Unit Membership Report

On or before June 1 and December 1 each year, completed membership reports shall be submitted to the Division Commander.

The requirement under this section of Department policy is not superseded by this requirement, and remains enforceable upon the unit.

7.124. Station Personnel File

The Division Commander shall ensure that an appropriate location is provided for the confidential storage of volunteer personnel files. He further shall determine the persons to whom these files are accessible.

7.1000. The Coroner Volunteer Program

7.1001. Preamble

The Division commits to maintaining a robust volunteer program. In doing so, it hopes to fulfill three primary purposes.

The first is to offer to interested and legally qualified persons an opportunity to observe and participate in a unique Department function, and thereby to broaden within the community an understanding of the range of services it provides, and the extent of the challenges it faces in doing so.

The second is to provide opportunities to enrich volunteers' lives. Many people seek enrichment through service; some through adding an experiential component to their education; others for social interactions that may be otherwise unavailable to them.

The last is to provide the Department an opportunity to recruit for permanent employment members who otherwise would not come to its attention.

7.1002. Training

The Division commits to training its volunteers to the extent resources are available. Training opportunities shall include, but are not limited to the functions:

- General Division responsibilities.
- Office or business (clerical) processes.
- Investigative operations.
- Morgue operations.

The Division Commander shall ensure that training manuals are developed to ensure volunteers may maximize the use of their knowledge, skills and abilities in a manner that adds value to both the volunteer and the Department. The Division recognizes that it must do so within limitations established by the Department.

The Division Commander shall ensure that training manuals are reviewed periodically to ensure they meet their developmental purpose.

7.1003. Permitted Activities

Volunteers shall be permitted to assist regular members in any Division function, but only to the extent the volunteer has been trained.

Volunteers shall not be permitted to perform any duties of the Division except under with permission, and immediate oversight of a regular member.

7.1004. Unusual Occurrences

In addition to the purposes described in section 7.1001., volunteer members provide a valuable augmentation of the regular workforce in response to unusual occurrences. Volunteers should maintain a readiness to respond to the Division, or other location as assigned, in response to such situations.

It is difficult because of their uncommon nature to provide guidance on the specific types of incidents for which volunteers should prepare. Certainly, any likely would involve multiple fatalities that occur as the result of a singular, or multiple coordinated, events; of an act of nature; or of large-scale accidents.

In response to such incidents, volunteers may be required to staff telephone banks, to organize or staff a family assistance center, to respond with regular members to death scenes, or to assist with morgue operations.

The Division intends to maximize the use of volunteers in response to unusual occurrences, to the extent that are trained, and willing and able to respond.