CONCORD POLICE DEPARTMENT
GENERAL ORDER

NATURAL, UNNATURAL AND ACCIDENTAL DEATHS

GENERAL ORDER: 08.06	**CREATED:** December 1, 2000	**ISSUE DATE:** October 9, 2025
CALEA STANDARDS: **NCLEA STANDARDS:**		**EFFECTIVE DATE:** October 16, 2025
ACTION: Amends general order dated October 1, 2022.		

08.06.0 PURPOSE

The purpose of this general order is to establish policies and procedures for investigating natural, unnatural, and accidental deaths.

08.06.1 POLICY

It shall be the policy of the Concord Police Department to thoroughly investigate deaths that occur outside a medical facility or the presence of medical personnel. This general order establishes minimum uniform procedures to be followed by officers during the preliminary investigation of all deaths. It is not the intent to itemize every step to be conducted during a death investigation.

08.06.2 DEFINITIONS

A. ACCIDENTAL

A death resulting from an unusual event that was unanticipated by everyone involved. The death was not intended, expected, or foreseeable.

B. HOMICIDE

The killing of one human being by another human being.

C. MEDICALLY ATTENDED DEATH

A death that is attended by a physician or other medical personnel at the time the subject died.

D. NATURAL DEATH

A death that occurs from natural causes, such as disease or old age.

E. SUICIDE

The intentional taking of one's own life.

F. UNNATURAL DEATH

A death caused by external causes (e.g., injury or poisoning) which includes death due to intentional injury, such as homicide or suicide, and death caused by unintentional injury in an accidental manner.

08.06.3 PROCEDURES

A. The responding officer should immediately assess the death as a possible homicide, suicide, accidental or natural/medically attended death and notify the district sergeant or watch commander.

B. In incidents of homicide, suicide, accidental or deaths of a suspicious nature the district sergeant or watch commander shall respond to the scene, thus taking command of the incident.

C. For a death that appears to be of natural causes but is outside of a medical facility and without the presence of medical personnel, attempts shall be made by law enforcement and emergency medical personnel to contact the current physician. The physician will have the option to sign the death certificate as a medical death.

D. In the event the subject's current physician refuses to sign off on the death or is unable to be located, the nursing supervisor on duty at Atrium Health Cabarrus should be contacted. The officer should provide information that the death appears to be medical or natural at which time the nursing supervisor will have the option to sign the death certificate.

E. In instances of homicide, suicide, accidental (to include overdose) or death under what is deemed to be suspicious circumstances, the responding district sergeant, or watch commander, shall contact the on-call supervisor. In these cases, the appropriate investigators and forensic unit coworkers shall respond.

F. After the on-call supervisor has been notified and is en route, the scene of the death shall be secured to protect its integrity, and the Incident/Investigation Report shall be completed.

G. In any instance where a juvenile (under the age of 18) has died outside of a medical facility, the on-call supervisor shall be notified, and the appropriate investigators and forensic unit coworkers shall respond.

H. Upon the arrival of investigative coworkers to the scene of a homicide, suicide, accidental or suspicious/undetermined death, they will assume control of the investigation. If requested, patrol units will remain on scene until the time when security of the scene is no longer needed.

I. Following the completion of the death investigation, the Death Investigation Module shall be completed as part of the incident report in the records management system. In an event where forensic unit coworkers investigated the scene, the forensic unit coworkers shall complete the report. Otherwise, the report shall be completed by the responding patrol officer.

08.06.4 SCENE PRESERVATION

A. The first officer on the scene is responsible for the preservation of the scene regardless of the manner of death. Make every effort to maintain the crime scene in the same physical condition as the suspect left it, and document the names of all responding personnel by recording who goes in and out of the scene. This should be documented on the Crime Scene Log (Form CS-3).

B. Responding officers should ensure that there are no victims within the crime scene requiring assistance.

C. In order to minimize any disturbance to potential evidence, EMS personnel shall be guided to the victim by taking the least evidence destroying path possible.

D. Except under emergency circumstances, coworkers should never touch, change, or alter anything until it has been documented, identified, and photographed.

James S. Hughes

JAMES S. HUGHES
CHIEF OF POLICE