

A. PURPOSE. To outline responsibilities of the assigned patrol officer in conducting death investigations.

B. GOALS

1. Determine if the death was the result of natural or unnatural causes
2. Conduct the investigation in a complete, thorough, and professional manner
3. Assist family/friends that are present in preparing for body removal
4. Assist family/friends with contacting other resources, i.e., clergy

C. SPECIFIC RESPONSIBILITIES

1. Upon arrival, officers shall secure the scene and attempt to determine if the death is suspicious, suicide involving a firearm, or an apparent homicide. If deemed to be such, the officer shall request a supervisor and other assistance as necessary and proceed with a preliminary investigation as outlined in Procedure 8-2.
2. Upon arrival at any death scene involving the sudden and unexplained death of an individual under the age of 18, officers shall proceed with a preliminary investigation as outlined in Procedure 8-2. The following shall also be initiated:
 - a. Immediately notify a supervisor and Forensic Services to respond to the scene.
 - b. The officer or supervisor at the scene shall notify the Watch Commander of any of the above-described death investigations.
 - c. The Watch Commander shall promptly notify the Commander of Investigations, Detective Unit Commander, Major Case Team Sergeant or Family Services Team Sergeant, and Forensic Services Unit Manager. For unexpected deaths, the Watch Commander shall notify a volunteer victim advocate (see MOP 7-10).
 - d. The Detective Unit Supervisor, once notified, shall determine the appropriate response.

3. If the death appears natural, the officer shall conduct a preliminary investigation to obtain all available information for the Medical Examiner. This information includes, but is not limited to:
 - a. All conditions surrounding the death scene.
 - b. Identification of the deceased, including social security number.
 - c. Prior medical problems, medications used, and physician's name and telephone number.
 - d. Any unusual circumstances.
 - e. Funeral home preference.
4. Officers shall contact the Medical Examiner for consultation and disposition of the body.
5. Officers shall not search or alter the position of the deceased until authorized by the Medical Examiner *unless an articulable exigency exists*.
6. When cleared by the Medical Examiner, officers shall ensure a funeral home is contacted. If family/friends request assistance in contacting a funeral home, officers shall assist in doing so. If family/friends are unable or not present to make that decision, officers shall contact the Office of the Medical Examiner for removal of the body.
7. Officers should attempt to assist family/friends in obtaining other assistance as would be reasonable, i.e., notifying other family members, clergy, or other resources that may be requested. Officers may request volunteer victim advocate(s) to assist with additional resources (see MOP 7-10).
8. Unless otherwise directed by a supervisor, officers shall remain on scene and with the body until the body has been removed.
9. If a death notification is to be done, it should be attempted along with an assigned patrol unit supervisor.