



## Policy and Procedure

Policy Number

13.13

Chapter

Criminal Investigations

Article

Death Investigations

Authorized By:

Eric R. Stewart, Interim Chief of  
Police

Effective Date: December 19, 2022

### PURPOSE

To provide guidelines for death investigations.

### POLICY

The Department will actively cooperate with the Larimer County Coroner's Office (LCCO) to investigate deaths and provide appropriate services to any witnesses and the decedent's family.

### DEFINITIONS

A **suspicious death** is where the death of the victim is unexpected, where circumstances/evidence lead the officer to believe that the death may have been caused by another, and those that appear to be: <CRS 30-10-606 (1)>

- a result of external influences, violence, injury, or suicide
- due to the influence of or the result of intoxication by alcohol, drugs, or poison
- a result of an accident, including at the workplace
- the death of an infant or child that is unexpected or unexplained
- to have occurred from the action of a peace officer or while in the custody of law enforcement officials or while incarcerated in a public institution
- sudden and happened to a person who was in apparent good health
- a body is unidentifiable, decomposed, charred, or skeletonized

### GENERAL GUIDELINES

#### Scene Considerations

The initial officer(s) on scene shall establish a perimeter, secure and preserve the crime scene, and collect/document any perishable evidence after medical personnel have determined that the victim is deceased. Officers will establish a crime scene log and shall not alter, move, or take control of any evidence at the scene unless there is an obvious safety threat or a potential for destruction or contamination to said items. Officers will maintain control over the scene until relieved by a supervisor or Criminal Investigations Unit (CIU) personnel.

#### Preliminary Investigation <CRS § 30-10-606 >

Officers will observe and report all conditions, events, and remarks. Officers will identify and interview witnesses and gather pertinent information following Department policy on preliminary investigations.

If at any time during the preliminary investigation the death is determined to be a suspicious death, the primary officer will notify the on-duty supervisor and the investigation will be turned over to the Department's Criminal Investigations Unit (CIU). The primary officer and CIU detective will determine who will notify the coroner.

If the coroner and the primary officer or detective agree that the circumstances surrounding the death are not suspicious, the officer will relinquish the scene to the LCCO. In order to assist the LCCO with the





identification of the deceased, location and identity of next of kin, and determination of the cause and manner of death, the coroner, by statute, may request that the Department collect, examine, and store any documents, evidence, or information, including information available in electronic devices such as phones or computers subject to the search and seizure limitations.

### Notifications

The on-duty supervisors(s) will ensure the appropriate CIU personnel are notified and will ensure that the proper administration notifications are made.

### Victims/Witnesses <Colo. Const. Art. II, Section 16a; CRS § 24-4.2-302.5 >

Officers will separate witnesses, when necessary, to preserve statement integrity. Officers will ensure provision of victim *and* witness rights per the Department's victim and witness assistance policy (including a pamphlet and offering of crisis intervention). The Colorado Constitution provides that the family of a deceased person may exercise the rights of the victim. The Victim Services Unit may be called to assist.

### Investigating the Crime Scene

Crime scene processing shall be completed by a Crime Scene Investigator (CSI), Crime Scene Analyst (CSA) or Detective upon request from the CIU or on duty supervisor. The detective may request assistance from a criminalist, crime scene investigator or crime scene analyst to conduct a thorough investigation of the scene and to collect all evidence relating to cause and manner of death, identity of the deceased, and the identification of the person(s) responsible for the death if applicable. The crime scene will be processed in accordance with the Loveland Police Department Crime Scene Processing Guidebook.

### CIU Arrival

The primary detective will respond to the scene and take control of and responsibility for the investigation. The CIU Sergeant will respond to the scene as deemed necessary and ensure that a primary detective has been assigned and carries out his/her responsibilities. Duties assigned to the primary detective may include the following:

- Ensure that the District Attorney's Office has been notified in all homicide cases
- Ensure the CIU supervisor is updated through timely communication and/or briefings as appropriate
- Brief the crime scene personnel regarding the circumstances
- Determine if all witnesses have been identified and are separated
- Assign detective/officer to interview any and all witnesses
- If a victim has been transported to a medical facility, assign detective/CSI/CSA to the victim to gather evidence or obtain statements made
- If a suspect is in custody or has been identified, ensure that a detective/CSI/CSA has been assigned to collect evidence or statements
- If victim is on scene and has not been transported, attempt to identify victim through other investigative means as soon as possible
- Assist in or prepare a press release regarding the investigation and maintain contact with the Public Information Officer (individual detectives or officers shall not make comments to the news media regarding the investigation)





CIU supervisors, if on scene, will manage all CIU resources, reassign any detective(s) as deemed necessary, and conduct briefings with involved personnel.

### **Handling the Homicide Suspect**

When dealing with suspects, living victims, and witnesses, Department personnel will take necessary steps to preserve trace evidence including, but not limited to, photography, bagging of the hands, collection of clothing, and collection of perishable evidence.

### **Homicide Investigation Follow-Up** <Colo. Const. Art. II, Section 16a>< CRS § 24-4.1-302.5 >

In addition to the tasks outlined in the Department's follow-up investigations' policy, the primary detective is responsible for ensuring Department personnel attend the autopsy, and for regularly updating the Victim Services Unit to apprise the victim's family/representative as to the status of the investigation.

