



OVERLAND PARK POLICE DEPARTMENT STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE

NUMBER: 3110
TOPIC: DEATH INVESTIGATION
EFFECTIVE DATE: 10/21/2021
SUPERCEDES: 02/10/2021

SIGNATURE: /s/ Frank Donchez
Chief of Police

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CALEA references: See below

I. PURPOSE 41.2.4

The purpose of this procedure is to establish guidelines for the handling of death investigations, and the criteria for notification of the Medical Examiner's Office. It is the policy of the Overland Park Police Department to investigate all death related calls.

II. PROCEDURE

The Criminal Investigations Division (CID) will be notified of all suspicious cases of human death to include: homicide, suicide, drug-related overdose, child/infant death, or from apparent unnatural causes. The CID has the primary responsibility to investigate the circumstances surrounding the death to ensure foul play was not present.

The CID supervisor or field supervisor will notify the Overland Park Crime Lab Detectives, (OPPD CSI), who will assess the scene and determine the need for Johnson County Criminalistics Laboratory personnel to respond and coordinate with them if needed. OPPD CSI will be notified on criminal investigations involving:

- Homicide/Murder Suicide
- Suspicious death
- Child and infant deaths
- Apparent suicide involving a witness, movement or relocation of the decedent, or unsecured residence.
- Death of in-custody person related to or involving police presence of any kind.

- Shooting and/or assaults with serious, critical, or life threatening injuries
- Elder abuse or neglect
- Sexual assault regardless of time elapsed or victim-offender relationship

OPPD CSI detective(s) or CSI supervisor will contact the Johnson County Sheriff's Office Crime Lab CSI if a death is a

- Homicide/homicide-suicide
- Officer involved shooting (to include death(s), injury(s), and non-injury)
- In-custody death or death involving a police presence of any kind
- Child/infant death

Notification of all deaths to the Medical Examiner's Office Medical legal Death Investigator (MDI) will be made, within 30 minutes of the discovery, through their 24hr on-call number. If there is no answer leave a message and call back number. Do not call the Sheriff's office court security unit unless there is no response from the MDI.

The investigating officer will brief the MDI of the nature and circumstances of the death so a decision can be made regarding whether the MDI will respond to the scene. The MDI will contact the decedent's personal physician if needed. The MDI will decide if the decedent will be transported for an autopsy or released to a funeral home.

If the MDI determines the death is suspicious the on-call Assistant District Attorney (ADA) will be contacted on their 24hr number and briefed.

A. FIELD SUPERVISORS' RESPONSIBILITIES

Field supervisors responding to a death investigation are responsible for overseeing the investigation unless/until it is transferred to CID personnel. The field supervisor is responsible for entering the deceased name into the Autopsy Log.

B. PRELIMINARY DEATH INVESTIGATIONS [55.2.6](#)

Scene security and crime scene management are of significant importance. Members must limit and document access to the scene, and locate and identify anyone who may have information about the event. Until the MDI advises otherwise, the decedent and any evidence will not be disturbed, including: not altering the scene in any way, not allowing family to move about the scene, not moving any weapons/medications/drugs/paraphernalia, and not looking for identification on or around the decedent.

Additional functions of importance include: notifying next of kin, assisting the family with the removal of the body, and providing for crisis intervention. This may be done by contacting a close friend or relative, a clergy member, or Department chaplain to be with the next of kin for support and to assist with making arrangements. The same resources should be considered when OPPD is requested to make emergency injury or death notifications for outside agencies.

C. DEATHS AT NURSING HOMES/ACUTE CARE/ASSISTED LIVING/MEMORY CARE/REHABILITATIVE

The Medical Examiner's Office will be called for all deaths. Deaths occurring at facilities outlined above are not necessarily deemed to be exclusively an "attended death" and will require the response of a patrol officer for further investigation. An attended death is defined as one in which the deceased has been under a medical doctor's care and the doctor agrees to sign the Death Certificate. This includes persons in hospice care or have a valid DNR (Do Not Resuscitate) on file. Unattended deaths are defined as a death, which occurs outside of a licensed nursing home or hospital.

The MDI can make the determination in regards to signing the death certificate without contacting the deceased's physician. If the MDI determines no autopsy is warranted, the body can be released to the family or the facility. The investigating officer can assist the family in making arrangements, but is not required to stay until the body is removed. An information report will be completed documenting the death investigation.

Note: Deaths occurring outside a licensed health care facility require a two-officer response.

D. DEATH BY OTHER CAUSES

Death investigations other than those listed in Section C, will require a two officer response to conduct a thorough investigation. If a death is suspicious, a CID supervisor will be contacted for assistance.

E. FIRE SCENE DEATHS

Officers on the scene of a fire where death has occurred should complete the following tasks as appropriate:

- Ensure a supervisor has been notified.
- Establish a perimeter and protect the crime scene.
- Identify and interview:
 - Victims, witnesses and survivors
 - Those with a property interest in the fire
 - On-scene firefighters and medical transport personnel
 - Persons contacted during a canvass
- Activate Arson Investigators and Crime Scene personnel
- Coordinate investigative efforts with the OP Fire Department, per [SOP 3020, Arson Investigation](#).

F. DISPOSITION OF PERSONAL PROPERTY

Personal property and effects in the immediate possession of the deceased, or on their person at the time of their autopsy, will be collected and maintained by morgue personnel per their policies and procedures.

Items identified as evidence not collected by the MDI should be taken into custody and checked into the OPPD Property Room.

G. POLICE REPORTS

Unless otherwise directed by a supervisor the initial dispatched officer to a death investigation will complete an *Incident Report*. All other Members involved in any suspicious death investigation will prepare a *Supplemental Report*.

H. MEDIA INQUIRIES

Information concerning any suspicious death or homicide will not be released to the public or news media unless authorized by the supervisor in charge of the investigation, OPPD's Public Information Officer (PIO), the District Attorney's Office, or the Chief of Police.

Information concerning natural deaths, suicides, or accidental deaths may be released by supervisors after family notifications have been completed. For additional see [SOP 1150. Media Policy](#)

I. SUDDEN INFANT DEATHS

Kansas Infant Death & SIDS Network (KIDS) is a not-for-profit Kansas agency that provides a support network for parents of infants who have died of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome.

Officers investigating SIDS deaths should consider contacting KIDS so their resources and services may be offered to the infant's family.

Contact information:

www.kidsks.org

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Revision Date:	10/13/2020
Revision Date:	02/10/2021
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CALEA REFERENCES:

[41.2.4](#)

[55.2.6](#)