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**ADMINISTRATIVE DIRECTIVE – 111.003**  
**UNATTENDED DEATHS**

**EFFECTIVE DATE: September 5, 1996**  
**AFFECTS: Sworn Personnel**

**REVISION DATE: October 15, 2019**

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**I. PURPOSE**

This directive outlines the appropriate response of police personnel to unattended deaths.

**II. POLICY**

The Plano Police Department will respond to any report of a death in which the cause or circumstances of death are unknown, the death is a suspected suicide, or the circumstances indicate the death may have been caused by unlawful means.

Except in emergency circumstances, a peace officer may not move the body or any part of the physical surroundings of the body until directed to do so by the Office of the Medical Examiner (Code of Criminal Procedure 49.05).

**III. DEFINITIONS**

- A. Physician – a practicing doctor of medicine or doctor of osteopathic medicine who is licensed by the Texas Medical Board.
- B. Unattended Death – any death which occurred while there was no physician present.

**IV. PROCEDURES**

A. Preliminary Investigation / Patrol Responsibilities

1. The responding officer at the scene of an unattended death, or any other death where there is a suspicion of foul play shall immediately notify:
    - a. Criminal Investigative Services,
    - b. The Office of the Medical Examiner shall be notified by Patrol only if a CAPers detective does not respond to the scene. Otherwise, notification shall be made by a CAPers detective.
  2. Notification to CAPers or the Medical Examiner's Office shall be made through Public Safety Communications (PSC) personnel, who will log the times notified.
  3. Upon arrival at an unattended death, Patrol shall complete the Plano Police Department Death Investigation Report and turn that report into Records.
  4. Patrol will make the notification to the next of kin unless CAPers responds to the scene, at which time it will be CAPer's responsibility to make the necessary notification.
  5. Unless CAPers responds, Patrol is responsible for ensuring body removal arrangements have been made prior to clearing the call.
    - (1) Officers shall directly contact the transporting establishment (e.g. funeral home) or confirm the family made contact.
    - (2) An estimated time of arrival should be obtained by PSC or the officer, and placed in the call notes.
    - (3) If a Chaplain is present, the officer shall remain on scene until released by the Chaplain AND removal arrangements have been made.
- b. The following shall be documented in the officer's report:
- (1) ME case number
  - (2) Transporting establishment contact information including name, location, and time.

B. CAPers Investigative Responsibilities

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1. An investigator from the Crimes Against Persons Unit will respond to any death in which foul play cannot clearly be ruled out. After speaking with on scene officers, the decision to respond shall be made by the CAPers detective unless specifically requested by a supervisor. If requested by a supervisor, CAPers shall respond.
  2. Responsibility for the crime scene shall be in keeping with PPD Policy 100.006.
  3. Notify the Office of the Medical Examiner and provide the Medical Examiner's Field Agent with all known facts.
  4. The investigator may recommend an autopsy be performed.
  5. The Crime Scene Investigative Unit (CSIU) will be notified by CAPers through PSC, who will log the times notified. CSIU will respond to all unattended deaths to process the scene and collect evidence with the exceptions noted in IV.C.
- C. Exception – Hospice Death
1. In the event the department is notified of the death of a terminally ill person in the person's place of residence, an officer will be dispatched to verify the circumstances reported.
  2. The Medical Examiners Office must be notified.
  3. CISD will not be called to the scene, unless requested by a supervisor.
  4. Plano Fire Department EMS personnel will not be dispatched to the scene unless they are specifically requested.