
	<b>PARADISE VALLEY POLICE GENERAL ORDER</b>  <b>Death Investigations</b>	Order Number
		<b>41.15</b>  Date <b>11-21-19</b>

## 41.15 Death Investigations

- A. If there is any question as to whether the person is in fact dead, *officers shall* call for medical assistance. In situations in which death is clear (burned bodies, decay or rigor mortis, for example), requesting medical assistance is not necessary.
- B. A.R.S. § 11-593 requires that any person having knowledge of the death of a human being, including a fetal death, *shall* promptly notify the nearest police *officer* of all information and circumstances surrounding the death, under any of the following circumstances:
1. Death when not under the current care of a *physician*, nurse practitioner, licensed midwife or physician's assistant.
  2. Death resulting from violence.
  3. Unexpected or unexplained death.
  4. Death of a person in custody in a jail, prison, or secure mental health facility.
  5. Unexplained or unexpected death of an infant child.
  6. Death occurring in a suspicious, unusual or unnatural manner, including death from an accident related to a person's occupation or employment.
  7. Death occurring as a result of anesthetic or surgical procedures.
  8. Death suspected to be caused by a previously unreported or undiagnosed disease that constitutes a threat to public safety.
  9. Death involving unidentifiable bodies.
- C. The *Department* is required to investigate *reports* of human death in the *jurisdiction*. The extent of the investigation *will* depend upon the circumstances of the death and *will* focus on ensuring that no criminal conduct is involved.
- D. An *officer* informed of a death meeting one of the above criteria is required to notify the county Medical Examiner or alternate medical examiner and, except in deaths occurring during surgical or anesthetic procedures from natural diseases, promptly conduct an

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investigation of the facts and circumstances surrounding the death and report the results to the Medical Examiner.

There is one exception to this requirement. If the deceased was under treatment for accident or illness by prayer or spiritual means alone, in accordance with the tenets and practices of a well-recognized church or religious denomination, and death occurred without a *physician* in attendance, the person who has knowledge of the death *shall* report all information regarding the death and circumstances surrounding it directly to the county Medical Examiner, who *may* waive an examination or autopsy.

- E. The death scene shall be managed and secured as a crime scene until it is determined that the death did not involve criminal conduct. Detectives should be called out to the scene of any homicide or suspicious death case. Except for emergency medical treatment and associated transport to a medical facility, the body shall not be removed from the place of the death without permission of the Medical Examiner. Initially responding officers should not alter the appearance or state of the body (including searching for identification) or the scene without the express permission of the Medical Examiner.
- F. The Medical Examiner *may* take any item found on the deceased or in the immediate vicinity that, in the opinion of the ME, *may* aid in determining the cause of death or the identity of the deceased. Items taken by the ME *shall* be recorded by the *officer* on a property-tracking document and signed for by the ME.
- G. Other *evidence* in the immediate vicinity of the deceased, including effects of the deceased or instruments or weapons that *may* have been used in the death, *shall* be removed by the investigating *officer*, classified as *evidence* and processed accordingly. Depending on the location of the crime scene, a *search warrant* *may* be required prior to any *search* for *evidence* at the scene (excluding that *evidence* which is in plain view).
- H. No property *shall* be taken from the scene for *safekeeping* without the permission of a *supervisor*. *Officers* *will* make every effort to secure the person's property before leaving the scene, including notification to the next of kin, guardian (if any), or the Public Fiduciary's Office.