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| **Policy: Suspicious Death Notification** | **Union County Coroner Office** |

Notification

For any death in which a crime is suspected, the following individuals/agencies must be notified, regardless of who first learns of the death.

1. Appropriate Law Enforcement Agency

2. Coroner’s Office

3. Union County Prosecutor’s Office

Medical Response

**Emergency Squad**

1. Emergency squad must exercise common sense in judgment upon arrival. If lifesaving procedures are

needed, all efforts will be made to resuscitate, transport, and save the patient. The scene and potential evidence shall be maintained for law enforcement personnel.

1. If the decedent has obviously died (i.e. rigor mortis/livor mortis present, injuries not sustainable to life) the

appropriate law enforcement agency will be contacted immediately for an investigation.

3. Law Enforcement shall immediately notify the Coroner’s Office of the death.

**Emergency Room**

1. Emergency room personnel will treat the patient in light of the information provided

by EMS, investigators and witnesses, in accordance with accepted medical procedures.

2. Upon declaration of death, medical equipment which has been placed in/on the

body should be left as is, and the coroner shall be notified. (See Union County Coroner’s Office Protocol

for Death in the Emergency Room section 3b)

Crime Scene Investigation

* + - 1. The investigation of the crime scene is the responsibility of the appropriate law enforcement agency, and the body is the responsibility of the Coroner’s Office. At a minimum, the following steps must occur:

1. Confirm that all notifications to the appropriate people/agencies have been made.
2. An officer will ensure that the crime scene has been made safe.
3. An officer will ensure that the perimeter of the crime scene is secured and that no one

enters it until a Detective/Investigating Officer and/or Coroner’s Office has been notified.

1. An officer will be assigned to keep a time and date log of those entering and exiting the crime scene.

Detective/Investigating Officer

1. Prior to anyone entering the scene, a Detective may confer with the county prosecutor to ensure that no warrant is needed before entering the scene.
2. The Detective may confer with the Coroner, the Prosecutor, and the Detective’s immediate supervisor. They will determine when or if a walk-through of the crime scene will be accomplished and whether it is appropriate for the agency with jurisdiction to handle the crime scene or if the Bureau of Criminal Investigation (BCI) should be requested.
3. If appropriate, the Detective and Coroner’s Representative will conduct one walk-through and will note what evidence needs to be preserved.
4. The need for an autopsy will be determined by the coroner’s representative.
5. The body of the decedent will be processed carefully by the Coroner’s Representative in the presence

of the Detective and bagged with all tubes, air passage devices, and other medical

equipment left in place for an examination by the forensic pathologist. A body bag will be

used, sealed, and labeled appropriately for prompt transportation for a forensic autopsy.

1. Law enforcement officers will follow their respective agency’s policy and procedure for crime scene

investigation.

1. Upon assignment by the agency, the Lead Detective will obtain a case overview

to brief the agency Chief/Sheriff, the head of investigations and the Prosecutor.

1. The Lead Detective will coordinate interviews, neighborhood canvasses and

other investigative measures.

1. The Lead Detective will work with the County Prosecutor concerning the need for

warrants, court orders, etc.

1. The Lead Detective or his/her designee may attend the forensic autopsy in order

to provide information to the forensic examiner, as well as learn information for use in the investigation.

1. The Prosecutor will be briefed on the following working day by the Lead Detective

as to the status of the case. Other law enforcement personnel should be included in such

briefings as needed. Subsequent briefings will be scheduled as determined by the Lead

Detective and Prosecutor based upon need.

1. The Lead Detective will follow their respective agency’s policy and

procedure for crime scene investigation.

County Coroner

1. The Coroner’s Office shall be notified immediately. As noted above, the official from the Coroner’s

Office will be escorted to view the body and confirm death. Every attempt will be made to ensure that

the body is not moved until viewed by the Coroner’s Office.

1. If the Coroner’s Office is notified before law enforcement, the Coroner’s Office will immediately advise

dispatch to notify the law enforcement agency with jurisdiction and then proceed to the death scene. If no

law enforcement is present the Coroner’s Representative will attempt to secure the scene to the best of

their ability without endangering their safety until law enforcement arrives on the scene. Prior to entering

the death scene, the official from the Coroner’s Office will coordinate his/her efforts with law

enforcement in order to preserve the scene and avoid contamination, as noted above.

1. The Coroner’s Office will determine the need for a forensic autopsy.
2. The Coroner’s Office will communicate directly with the Detective to facilitate

transport of the body to the autopsy and /or funeral home.

1. Depending on the circumstances of the investigation, the autopsy may be attended by Law

Enforcement and/or Coroner’s Office. Since the autopsy is part of the investigation to show cause and

manner of death, as well as to communicate with the Detective about details of

the investigation, this information would be considered sensitive to the investigation and attendance by

others such as defense attorneys, defense investigators and members of the media would not be

appropriate.

Prosecuting Attorney

1. The Prosecutor will be notified immediately of all suspicious and/or violent deaths, to include

infant/child deaths. The Prosecutor may be called to all death scenes where criminal charging is a

possibility.

1. The Prosecutor or his/her representative will determine whether to respond to any crime scene;

he/she may provide a representative if a law enforcement agency or the Coroner’s Office requests the

Prosecutor’s presence and /or assistance.