Policy: Safety Apparel and Procedures at Scenes

Page 1 of 2

Policy: Forensic Technicians and Special Investigator perform duties at a scene of death which may expose them to work-related hazards. The health and well-being of the staff is supremely important, so those employees are I) issued personal safety apparel to protect them from such hazards, 2) trained to use apparel and follow procedures so they can safely perform their duties at a scene of death, 3) instructed how to store, maintain and wear safety apparel, and 4) instructed how to report any problems related to safety procedures or apparel.

Authority: The Office of the Chief Medical Examiner is responsible for providing apparel, procedures and training. The Supervisor of Special Investigators and the Forensic Technician Supervisor are responsible for assuring that their staff is issued apparel and attend training, and for monitoring the staff at scenes of death to assure their compliance with safety procedures. The staff is responsible for maintaining, storing and wearing the safety apparel issued to them, and for adhering to the procedures described here.

Procedure:

1. Forensic Technicians and Special Investigators are issued equipment and clothing at time of hire and new or replacement items when needed to perform their duties.
2. Forensic Technicians are given jumpsuits, jackets, and water-proof boots, and supplied with disposable gloves.
3. Special Investigators are given Tyvek® suits, jumpsuits, shoe covers, hair covers, hard hats, bunker boots, rain gear and disposable gloves.
4. Forensic Technicians and Investigators are issued Class 2 high-visibility vests to wear when they are exposed to motor vehicle traffic.
5. Mortuary Transport Vehicles contain hard hats for responding Forensic Technicians.
6. The Technicians and Investigators must contact the on-site official in charge of securing the scene before proceeding with any work activities.
7. In cases of fatal accidents on or near roadways, the staff should communicate in person or by telecommunication to notify the in-charge official of their presence.
8. In cases involving exposure to motor vehicle traffic, the staff must wear their high-visibility vest.
9. In cases involving a structural fire, staff is not allowed to enter the scene to which the Fire Marshal has barred admittance due to health and safety hazards. Any OCME personnel entering a burned structure, after allowed by the Fire Marshall, must wear a hard hat and fire grade boots. The boots protect the lower extremities from heat and hot objects, water and hazardous chemicals.
10. Staff are not obligated to enter a scene they deem to be unsafe, and should address their safety concerns to the in-charge official to remove any apparent or potential hazards before entering the scene.
11. Forensic Technicians store their safety apparel in their locker at OCME, and Investigators store theirs in their state-issued vehicle or in their locker at OCME.
12. The hard hat and boots, along with all other safety apparel, must be stored in a location accessible to OCME employees responding to a death scene.
13. All staff are responsible for using equipment and wearing apparel according to the manufacturer's instructions.
14. All staff are responsible for cleaning equipment and apparel after use and for storing items according to the manufacturer's instructions.
15. All OCME personnel are responsible for adhering to this policy and for promptly reporting any safety-related problems to their supervisor.
16. Report any defective or malfunctioning equipment and/or apparel to the supervisor within 24 hours of discovery. The supervisor and Administrator (or designated person) will determine if the equipment/apparel will be replaced or repaired.
17. OCME personnel should not proceed with their duties unless they have all the equipment and apparel needed to safely perform the duties.
18. The failure of any staff member to adhere to this policy and procedure may result in disciplinary action for violating safety protocol.
19. Forensic Technicians and Special Investigators receive an annual uniform allowance in order to purchase safety footwear.
    1. Per Article 9 Section 12, Forensic Technicians:
       1. Employees who are required to wear uniforms which are not provided by the Employer, shall receive a $100.00 annual uniform allowance. Such payment shall be made on or about July 15 of each year.
    2. Per Article 24 Section 24, Special Investigators:
       1. Effective July 1, 2019 employees who are required on a daily basis to wear safety shoes shall receive an annual allowance of one hundred dollars ($100).

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Signature Date