

SECTION 16 - PREPARING DECEDENT FOR TRANSPORT

I. INTRODUCTION

Maintaining jurisdiction over the body allows the C/D Co protect the chain of custody as the body is transported from the scene to a regional forensic center for specimen collection and autopsy. Proper preparation of the body for transport is crucial in preserving the integrity of any evidence that might be associated with the body.

When coroner jurisdiction has been assumed, every decedent should receive some form of identification tag listing known information such as name, date of birth, county of death, etc. Unidentified remains should be tagged as JANE/JOHN DOE, county of death, date of death (or whatever verbiage is recognized and in use by the county). To maintain the integrity of chain of custody of the decedent, untagged bodies should not be transported to ALDFS.

The body should be sealed in a clean, unused, body bag for transportation to DFS if autopsy is ordered. Clothing and other personal effects that are on the body of the deceased should be removed from the body and transported with Chain of Custody Form, to the SCCO. Unless certain of the cause of death, these items may become important evidence in the future. Seal the body bag with a tamper proof, locking, seal (numbered plastic zip ties/lock) to ensure that the body has not been disturbed during transport and storage prior to examination.

In cases of homicide, suspected homicide, or other suspicious deaths, the hands should be “bagged” in order to preserve evidence. Use paper bags only (plastic does not breathe and moisture can develop inside of the bag and ruin any evidence that may be present). Secure the bags with tape about the forearms, wrapping tape at the level of the top of the bag without touching the skin. Sometimes it may be necessary to bag the feet as well. When in doubt, bag the hands to preserve any evidence or suspected evidence during transport. For cases of homicide or suspicious deaths, wrapping the body in a clean, white cotton or disposable sheet is recommended. Minimal handling of the body in these cases is crucial for preservation of evidence. Emphasis should be on maintaining the body and associated evidence for collection in a proper facility where trace evidence can be more easily visualized and collected.

If ballistics, other weapons, or evidence are noticed within a wound, every effort should be made to preserve the evidence in situ for transport to the examination facility.

In the event that there are multiple body parts, especially if it is believed that there may be more than one victim, each body part should be individually tagged and placed into a separate bag for transport. Do not attempt to match body parts on scene.

SECTION 16 - MORTUARIES/FUNERAL HOMES AND CORONER REMOVALS

I. INTRODUCTION

The Shelby County Coroner's Office recognizes the important partnership that exists between the Coroner and the local mortuaries and funeral homes. This relationship must work both ways for each agency to provide the highest level of service and each agency must understand the needs of the other. This section delineates those guidelines.

II. MORTUARY/FUNERAL HOME SELECTION

At no time will an employee with the Shelby County Coroner's Office recommend or refer a mortuary or funeral home. Families shall be referred to the local yellow pages or other sources for a listing of those establishments.

In general, body transport from the scene of death to the autopsy facility will be made by staff of the Shelby County Coroner's Office. If the family has chosen a funeral home, the Coroner's Office may call the funeral home to transport to the autopsy facility. If an autopsy will not be performed and the body can be released, the Coroner's Office shall either transport to the morgue facility and have the funeral home pick up the body from the facility at a later time or the Coroner's staff may call the funeral home to come pick up the body from the scene.

If the death occurs in a hospital setting, normally hospital personnel will dispatch the mortuary/funeral home. If the C/DC responds to the scene and, after investigation, an autopsy is indicated, the C/DC must be certain proper arrangements and schedules are made with the transporting agency or transport the body themselves. Similar procedures shall apply to deaths occurring in a hospice or nursing home setting.

III. REMOVALS

Removal of decedents from scenes can be made by either the C/DC or by the mortuary/funeral home requested by the family. In the event family is not at the scene or if family requires additional time to make a mortuary/funeral home selection, the C/DC shall perform the removal.

IV. DISPATCHING A MORTUARY/FUNERAL HOME FOR REMOVAL FROM A DEATH SCENE

When a C/DC makes contact with a mortuary/funeral home for a removal, time is of the essence. Mortuary/funeral home personnel must realize the decedent may be in an uncomfortable location for family. Law Enforcement and/or the C/DC may have been on scene for some time performing the scene investigation. Conversely, the C/DC must understand the approximate response time of the mortuary/funeral home and dispatch them accordingly.

Management of the mortuaries/funeral homes should consider policies within their organizations in order to insure a timely and safe response is made to requested scenes. The Shelby County Coroner's Office believes the following time frames are appropriate:

1. Close-in removals should be made within 60 minutes of dispatching.
2. Outlying removals will have varying response times and mortuary/funeral home personnel shall be prepared to give a good-faith estimate of arrival time at time of dispatch, but generally within 60 mins.

The only information to be given to the mortuary/funeral home at time of dispatch will be the address and any special circumstances that might require special handling including, but not limited to, access, decedent weight and condition of the remains. All demographic information will be provided on the Mortuary Release provided to the mortuary/funeral home upon removal.

Location instructions will be given for unusual scenes. However, the mortuaries/funeral homes shall be responsible for providing routing information via maps or GPS units to their transporters.

V. RECEIPT OF BODY

Receipt of body must be completed by the releasing C/DC. The SCCO transport agency or the Funeral Home/or her representative must sign for the decedent on the release.

SECTION 17 – DESIGNATED SCCO TRANSPORTING AGENCY

I. INTRODUCTION

The Shelby County Coroner's Office has three methods of transporting decedents to the morgue and to DFS Montgomery. The SCCO does have her own transport vehicle equipped with a stretcher. The SCCO has also arranged for two private companies to facilitate in transport. These companies, Regional Paramedic Services and Mack Mortuary Transport Services, along with the SCCO vehicle must comply with the following requirements:

1. The transport vehicle must be in good working mechanical service.
2. The transport vehicle must with clean- inside and outside.
3. The transport vehicle must not have any outside markings (with the exception of RPS).
4. The transport vehicle must maintain appropriate automobile insurance.
5. The transport vehicle must have clean working stretchers.
6. All decedent removals must be handled in a dignified manner.

PURSUANT TO AL CODE 11-5-50-52

Coroner is responsible for storage and transport to DFS.
Coroner is reimbursed for transport from LE agency

As of today 05/01/2024 Costs are as follows:

\$150 from scene to SCCO Morgue

\$150 from SCCO Morgue to DFS Montgomery

\$150 from DFS Montgomery to SCCO Morgue

Daily morgue storage fee \$100