

Charleston County Coroner's Office Policy #30

Title: Photographs and Videos

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30.1 POLICY

All Deputies will be issued photographic equipment which will be used for the purpose of scene photography and photography of the decedent. It is the responsibility of any Deputy attending a death scene to properly photograph the scene as described in this policy. All photographs will be maintained permanently in the Charleston County Coroner's Office. Video recordings of some death scenes and re-enactments will also be done at the discretion of the on-scene deputy or by the direction of a supervisor.

30.2 PROCEDURE FOR PHOTOGRAPHY

1. When arriving on a death scene, the responding Deputy should determine the accuracy of the scene from the first responders. It is crucial to find out if the body was moved/covered/uncovered, temperature altered, doors opened/closed and who did the alterations to the scene and/or body.
2. Photographs should encompass the entire scene; move from the general to the specific and objects of importance should be shown in relationship to the surroundings.

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3. A scale shall be used in those circumstances when no frame of reference is present.

4. Generally, photographing a scene shall include:

- a) A placard shot identifying the scene address or location, date, time, and photographer.
- b) Documentation of the environment or living conditions.
- c) Entrance to the room where the decedent is located.
- d) Full body views, showing orientation shall be taken at all scenes to establish body condition/clothing and position in relation to the overall scene.
- e) General view of body and scene.
- f) Close-up of the body to include the face, head, torso, legs, hands, arms, and feet (front and back view of all listed).
- g) Photos of any visible wounds/foul play.
- h) Photos of any trace evidence, foreign material, blood patterns, and other important items such as jewelry on the body.
- i) Photograph of body bag lock secured on the body bag.
- j) Photograph of the area from which the body was post removal.
- k) Suicide note.
- l) Medication.
- m) Currency or other valuable personal effects.

2. Investigative pictures should be downloaded to the office shared drive in a timely manner and marked with the case number prior to uploading to the online records management system. Cases receiving an autopsy should have the scene pictures available to the pathologist before autopsy. Photographs shall be retained indefinitely in the online records management system. The current records management system utilized by this office is Medicolegal Death Investigation Log, MDI Log (MDI).

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3. Video recording- It is important to explain to the people involved that by consenting to be video recorded, it is not an interrogation, and subjects being videotaped should not be put on the offensive. It is simply a tool that this Office uses to aid in the death investigation. Before beginning a recorded re-enactment, explain to law enforcement that may be present that this is not a time for them to be speaking or asking questions.

4. It is best practice to have two Deputies involved in the re-enactment. One Deputy may operate the camera or other means of video recording may be utilized. The other deputy or the Coroner will facilitate the re-enactment. It is important to record the subject's demeanor during the interview.

5. Always start the video by introducing the subject, date, time, and reason for videoing. If the subject is wearing a hat, ask them to remove it so that all facial expressions are visible. End each video with the date, time, and deputies doing the video and the name of the subject.

6. All video(s) should be downloaded to the office shared drive and uploaded to the online records management system in a timely manner if the file size is within the limits of the system.