



## **Scene Investigation Policy**

**Policy# 14-0703-2 Scene Investigation Policy Total pages=3 Revised 04/29/2024**

**Purpose:** To provide our investigative staff with guidelines on scene investigations.

**Justification:** It is necessary to have guidelines for conducting scene investigations to aide in determining the manner of death while maintaining the safety of the investigator and the integrity of the scene.

**Policy:**

1. Our office will have a death investigator and/or coroner available 24 hours a day to respond to death calls and scene investigation.
2. The death investigation conducted by the coroner, or his/her representative will be an independent investigation separate from law enforcement or other agencies.
3. All reports of death will be made to our answering service; the answering service will page/text the on-call investigator.
4. Death notifications are received in this office from a law enforcement agency, medical personnel and other various entities. When the call is received, the investigator will obtain the necessary information to determine if the call falls under the jurisdiction of the office. He/she will determine if a scene response is necessary or if the information can be taken over the telephone.
5. Upon arrival at the residence/scene, the investigator will contact the law enforcement officer or medical personnel present to obtain the necessary information regarding the circumstances leading up to the event, the actual event itself and any pertinent facts including medical history.
6. If the scene is suspected crime scene, the investigator will discuss the need for a search warrant as described in Policy #14-0213-1 Search Warrant Policy.
7. The investigator will enter the scene along with the law enforcement investigator. If the investigator arrives prior to the law enforcement investigator, the investigator will wait on the law enforcement investigator to enter the scene unless circumstances warrant entering the scene immediately, such as a death that EMS or other competent observer has not legally pronounced the individual

- deceased or a scene that has not secured properly. In these cases, the investigator shall enter to pronounce or protect the scene but the scene will not be disturbed.
8. The investigator will wear the appropriate personal protection clothing for protection against any biohazards that may be present and for prevention of contamination of the scene. This includes gloves and shoe/boot covers plus Tyvek suits and N95 Respirators when necessary.
  9. The investigator will follow all government safety standards while conducting an investigation and will enter a scene only after the scene is deemed safe by the appropriate authorities.
  10. Prior to altering the body or scene, photographs of the scene and body will be taken as per Policy #14-0530-1 Forensic Photography Policy. Be sure to take an overall photo of the body in relationship to scene. Consider the need for a field sketch.
  11. The investigator will conduct an external examination of the decedent and pronounce/confirm death as per Policy# 14-0619-6 Declaration of Death.
  12. The investigator will document all pertinent findings per Policy #12-0720-1 Time of Death Policy.
  13. All necessary evidence will be documented and collected by the investigator and/or the law enforcement investigator, including all medications. Follow proper chain of custody procedures.
  14. If the death is suspicious, the investigator will swab the body for touch DNA. Areas that the suspect may have touched will be swabbed and the swabs submitted to Ohio Bureau of Investigation Lab or handed to law enforcement for submission.
  15. The body will be prepared for removal as per Policy #12-0810-1 Body Removal Policy. The disposition of the body will be determined by case circumstances.
  16. Death Investigation Checklist:

A. Referral

1. Date/time
2. Reporting person/agency. 911 Call time.
3. Type of death
4. Body location
5. Elapsed time between notification of death and report.

B. Arrival at scene

1. Date/time. Physical Address.
2. Other agencies present/names and ID/arrival time
3. Collaboration on Investigation
4. Emergency aid given/by whom/procedure used/medication given

C. Deceased found

1. Date/time
2. By whom/agency or relationship to deceased

D. Pronounced dead

1. Date/Time/Where
2. By whom/Agency
3. Authority

E. Death scene

1. Location. Use GPS coordinates if outdoors.
2. General description
3. Weather conditions at and since time of death (if applicable)
4. Detailed description of site where body found
5. Scene documentation
6. Surface on which body is lying

F. Deceased description

1. Basic description
2. Clothing/Condition/Placement/Defects
3. Rigor & Livor Mortis; Algor Mortis when appropriate.
4. When last seen alive and by whom
5. Date/Time evidence (newspapers, lights on, etc.)

G. Physical evidence present

H. Identification

1. Method of identification
2. By whom
3. When/where

I. Transport body to morgue

1. Protect and preserve trace evidence on body

J. Additional

1. Request any forensic testing needed
2. Continue identification confirmation
3. Confirm notification of next of kin.
4. Prepare necessary reports
5. Request medical records, other agencies reports

*This policy has been approved and is in effect until further notice:*

  
Benjamin Trotter, DO, Coroner

  
Date