

Radiology

Created 06/17/2013

Revised 11/01/2023

Purpose

To identify the need for proper technique and safety of the employees using the x-ray equipment.

Policy

It is the policy of the [REDACTED] to adhere to state and national standards for safety, and to use best practices to effectively utilize radiographs in the assessment of appropriate cases.

Procedures

Radiographs

The [REDACTED] shall complete necessary radiographs on cases where evidence needs to be located prior to examination, for radiographic documentation of injuries or evidence, for aid in identification, or for the safety of the autopsy staff. Full-body radiographs are to be performed in all cases requiring radiology, with anterior-posterior and lateral views. Below is a list of cases where radiographs are required, however this is not an all-inclusive list. Radiographs may be done at the request of the forensic pathologist handling the case at their discretion.

Gunshot wounds and stab wounds

If the medicolegal death investigator suspects a possible gunshot wound or stab wound, full-body radiographs shall be obtained. Consideration should also be given for associated areas where a projectile may have traveled.

Decomposed and unidentified remains

If the [REDACTED] accepts jurisdiction on a decomposed decedent, full-body radiographs shall be taken when decomposition precludes the evaluation for the presence of injury. Additionally, dental radiographs shall be obtained on all decomposed bodies for identification purposes. The same shall be done on individuals where no identification is known.

Child and infant deaths

If the [REDACTED] accepts jurisdiction on a child or infant death, anterior-posterior and lateral radiographs encompassing the entire body shall be taken. These shall include separate radiographs to demonstrate the hands and feet if necessary.

Technique and schedule of exposure

In order to ensure proper orientation for all radiographs, an "L" for left or an "R" for right must be placed within the radiograph area. It should be within the picture, but not obstructing the view of a structure or item of evidence. Once the radiograph has been taken, and before the image is stored, an annotation shall be included in the radiograph that identifies the case number. This may be placed at any location within the radiograph that does not obstruct the view of a structure or item of evidence.

In order to ensure proper exposure for the radiographs, the standard schedule saved in the electronic program for all areas of the body should be utilized. If the exposure cannot be improved by shifting the exposure range within the digital radiograph system after an image has been captured, the technique may be adjusted using the posted schedule in the radiology room.

All radiographs must be commensurate with the purpose of the x-ray examinations. They shall also be loaded into the digital case management system filed under x-ray images so they may be readily retrievable.



Staff Safety

When radiographs are being taken, the staff member shall keep the door to the radiology room closed to utilize the room's built-in safety functions which are in line with industry standards. Additionally, when capturing the image, the staff member shall stand behind the barrier wall. When this is not possible, a lead vest shall be worn by all staff members in the radiology room.

All staff members shall wear radiation monitoring tags while performing duties within the radiology room. These tags shall be routinely submitted for evaluation consistent with our caseload. If it is found that an individual is approaching, has reached, or has exceeded their exposure limits that staff member's radiology responsibilities will be immediately suspended. They shall be directed to the appropriate medical consultation per the County Attorney's Office Risk Management department employee safety protocol. Remedial training shall also be done to evaluate underlying factors putting the individual at risk of exposure.

Equipment maintenance

The  shall maintain all radiology equipment according to recommendations from the contracted service provider, given our caseload. These records shall be retained by both the contracted service provider as well as the  administrator.

All radiology equipment shall be properly and currently licensed by the State of Colorado.

Policy/Procedure Violations

Violations of this policy are grounds for disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

Revised Effective: 10/18/2015
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Approved by:

