

Body Transport and Handling

Policy:

The coroner should be consulted with any questions regarding body disposition.

Decedents who are not identifiable visually at the scene must be transported to the Skagit County Coroner's Office for proper identification. An exception would be if there are specific scars, marks or tattoos and/or medical hardware externally present that could be used to confirm ID at the scene.

- The coroner must be notified upon this circumstance.

The body may be released from the scene directly to the selected funeral home by the investigator. These instances may include cases deemed to be due to natural causes, cases with significant documented medical history, cases where the death appears natural but there are possible concerns about toxicology, cases in which next of kin cannot be reached but there are pre-arrangements with a funeral home.

Cases in which a postmortem examination is needed will require transport by the investigator to the county morgue.

Postmortem examinations should be performed on all deaths due to accident, suicide, undetermined manner, apparent drug toxicity, apparent homicides, suspicious circumstances, and infant deaths. Hospitalization may obviate the need for an autopsy in certain cases.

Preparation for Transport

For cases being transported to the County Morgue, the investigator will place the body into a clean zippered body pouch or plastic shroud, in a supine position.

For any apparent homicide, suspicious death, deaths in custody or gunshot wound (s), the decedent's hands should be placed in clean paper bags and secured at the wrist with tape to retain possible trace evidence and blood spatter pattern.

For any apparent homicide or suspicious death, the investigator will use a new fitted sheet to preserve any trace evidence as well as a new zippered body pouch. The body bag will be sealed with an integrity seal to ensure the integrity of all evidence on or around the body.

For cases that are directly released from the scene to a funeral home, the funeral home will prepare the body for transport including using their own body shroud. body can be placed in a plastic shroud. A body tracking event in MDI log shall be completed and signed by the designee of the funeral home. In the event that the funeral home will be delayed, the investigator will request that law enforcement sign for the release of the body back to the scene with the funeral home enroute.

Medications and Illicit Substances

The Skagit County Coroner's Office **will not** accept or take custody of any medication, drug (illicit or prescription), or drug paraphernalia from the scene of a death or from any agency that has collected said medication or drug in association to a death investigation. The investigator will photograph the medication, drug, and/or paraphernalia and request that the law enforcement official attending the scene collect it as evidence or for destruction.

If medications, drugs, or drug paraphernalia are found after the body has arrived at the morgue, the coroner must be notified so release to law enforcement or disposal can be arranged.

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Personal Property

Personal effects found on the body will be photographed, documented in MDI log under *property/evidence* tab and released to the legal next of kin present at the scene or transported with the body to the morgue to be later released to the funeral home or family. If released to the legal next-of-kin on scene, a release form shall be created in MDI log and signed by the legal next of kin with photo ID verification.

If the property does not belong to the decedent, then it will be released to law enforcement at the scene or following discovery.

If personal property is removed from the body at the scene, but cannot be released to family or law enforcement, then the investigator will place that property in a property bag and placed in the body bag with the body.

All property transported back to the Coroner's Office will be photographed and documented prior to release. All property will be photographed all together in one picture prior to being placed into a property bag.

Property will be placed into a property bag and sealed. The property bag will be placed in the secured evidence locker in the morgue.

Affix a green/yellow property tag to the body bag to alert the releasing party to the presence of the property. Add case to the white board under *property in house*.