

Photography

Policy:

All photographs taken by the Coroner's Office will be electronically backed up off site by the Skagit County Central Services Department.

Upon return to the Coroner's Office, the photographs will be uploaded by the scene investigator into the electronic case file and MDI log and retained indefinitely.

All scene photographs will be made available to the board-certified forensic pathologist assigned to the case as well as to the investigating law enforcement agency of jurisdiction.

The photographs shall not be shared or copied by any investigator unless a formal written request is received by the Coroner's Office and approved by the Coroner.

SCENE

The case investigator will

- Remove all non-essential personnel from the scene (family, bystanders, law enforcement officials) if possible.
- Obtain an overall photograph of the scene upon arrival.
 - If the scene is a house or apartment, the investigator will photograph the house or apartment number
- Photograph the scene from different angles
- Photograph intersections, street signs, landmarks and business signs
- Photograph posted speed limit and road caution signs.
- Photograph specific areas of the scene when appropriate, including but not limited to;
 1. Entryways such as doors and windows, to demonstrate the state of security or non-security
 2. Sleeping quarters and progressive photos documenting the quality of living space.
 3. Living and Eating areas
 - a. Contents of the refrigerator, freezer and cabinets to establish the decedent's eating or drinking habits.
 4. Toilets and medicine cabinets.
 5. Prescription medication bottles (entire label), counts of pills to justify the remaining quantity. (pour out the medication and group into groups of 5 or 10, then place the pill bottle displaying the medication next to the pills and take a photograph)
 6. Weapons (gun cabinets, safes, storage or lack thereof)
 7. Newspaper and mail with dates clearly visible.
 8. Apparent suicide notes, notes of intent, calendars, diaries, journals, email, text messages, books (Final Exit, Hemlock Society), DVDs and videos that aid in the certification of the cause and manner of death.
 9. Evidence of drugs or drug paraphernalia as well as areas containing evidence of acute and chronic alcohol use.
 10. Vehicles and license plates (from all angles including the undercarriage of the vehicle if possible).

Photography cont.

BODY

The case investigator will

- Photograph the body from different angles in the position found and when the body is turned over.
- A close-up photograph of the decedent's face as it is first observed.
- Photograph evidence of resuscitative efforts.
- Photograph the hands (dorsal and ventral) and photograph the feet including the soles of the feet.
- Use scales in photographs to document relative size of specific evidence such as injuries, scars, etc.
- Photograph identifying information such as government issued ID to aid in the identification of the decedent.
- Photograph personal effects on the body and where those items came from (i.e. front right pocket of pants).
- Photograph with all pant and jacket pockets turned inside out (if applicable)
- Photograph ID bands already on body and ID bands placed on the body by the scene investigator.
- Photograph any integrity seal used.
- Photograph the area after the body has been removed from the scene.

After all pertinent photographs have been taken of the body and the body will be transported to the Coroner's Office,; the investigator may wipe all secretions from the face and take a second photograph of the face for identification purposes. This cleaned up photo will be taken after external examination by autopsy staff at the Skagit County Coroner's Office.

WEAPONS

Weapons found at the scene must be photographed and documented.

The scene investigator will photograph:

- the original location of the weapon
 - if moved, this should be noted in the investigator's report.
- the condition of the weapon as well as photographically document all aspects of the weapon including make, model, serial number.
- the location of any expended and unexpended rounds.

Firearms must be unloaded by a qualified firearms handler "law enforcement", at the scene.

FIREARMS ARE NOT TRANSPORTED TO THE OFFICE AND SHOULD BE LEFT IN THE CUSTODY OF LAW ENFORCEMENT.