

County of Santa Clara

Medical Examiner-Coroner

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MEDICAL EXAMINER - CORONER
COUNTY OF SANTA CLARA



TO: General Public

FROM: Medical Examiner-Coroner

SUBJECT: **Public Disclosure of Cost Data**

DATE: May 23, 2024

The following information is being provided to the public regarding costs and fees pertaining to body removal and storage fees.

Body Transport (Removal Fee)

California Government Code 27472 allows the Medical Examiner-Coroner (ME-C) to collect the “actual expense incurred by the coroner in removing the body from the place of death” from the individual responsible for interment. The ME-C is further authorized by Santa Clara County ordinance Section A14-68 of Chapter XIII of Division A14 to collect these fees. The ME-C utilizes a third-party vendor to provide transportation services, and their costs have increased in the past two years. The transportation cost for each case is set by the contract with the vendor and is based on the distance away from the ME-C office (based on three zones) and the number of drivers required to remove the decedent from the scene and transport to the ME-C office. To determine the revised Removal Fee, invoice totals received by the ME-C office from the transportation vendor were reviewed for the May through August 2023 period, and these totals were divided by the number of cases transported, resulting in an average cost per case of \$265. Each case requires either a human remains pouch or plastic shroud, the average cost of which is \$10.16, for a total body transportation cost of \$275, a 31% increase from the current fee.

Storage of Remains

California Government Code 27472 allows the ME-C to recoup the cost for “keeping the body” outside of the time necessary to complete the ME-C’s duties from the individual responsible for interment. The ME-C does not assess this storage fee until the decedent has been identified, examined, and the legal next of kin notified. Once these three requirements are satisfied, the ME-C provides the legal next of kin a five-business-day grace period to allow them time to plan arrangements with a funeral home for final disposition. Once the five-day grace period has passed, storage fees accrue for each business day the body is held at the ME-C office. The assessed fees are meant to recoup the cost for caring for the decedent and to offset the additional responsibility placed on the agency to retain decedents for extended periods in refrigeration. The fee is based on facility costs and the labor required from ME-C Investigators, Technicians, and Administration staff to manage each case, including family communication, refrigeration, and monitoring of the decedent, and was calculated to be \$58 per business day, an 18% increase from the current fee of \$49.

The MEC is making this data available to the public. Please call 408-793-1900 if you have any questions.

Board of Supervisors: Sylvia Arenas, Cindy Chavez, Otto Lee, Susan Ellenberg, S. Joseph Simitian
County Executive: James R. Williams