

WHAT DO I DO NOW?

Some Helpful Information from the
Medical Examiner-Coroner

**MEDICAL EXAMINER - CORONER
COUNTY OF SANTA CLARA**



Santa Clara County
Medical Examiner-Coroner
850 Thornton Way
(Corner of Thornton Way and Enborg Lane,
near Valley Medical Center)
San Jose, CA 95128-4702
Tel: (408) 793-1900
Fax: (408) 793-1934
Website: www.scc-mec.org

Dealing with the death of a family member or friend is never easy. The Medical Examiner-Coroner is mandated by State Law to investigate all sudden, unusual or medically unattended deaths within the County. A case must be reported to the Medical Examiner-Coroner when the death involves a possible criminal act, suicide, accident or injury, when a person is not under the care of a physician, or when the deceased had not seen a physician in more than 20 days. The Office's specially trained staff perform tests, investigate the cause and manner of death and maintain relevant records. The following information may be helpful:

MAKING ARRANGEMENTS

There will be a fee for the transportation of your loved one to the Medical Examiner-Coroner's Office. This fee is payable to the mortuary of your choice. Daily care fees will begin to accrue after five business days, after positive I.D., notification of N.O.K., and the examination has been completed. It may be helpful for you to speak to friends or family who have had to make funeral arrangements. All funeral homes are required by law to quote services and prices over the phone. You should call or have someone call various funeral homes before making your decision. The Medical Examiner-Coroner cannot recommend specific funeral homes. After you have made your selection, inform the funeral home that the Medical Examiner-Coroner is involved. You will then be asked to sign a release form

authorizing the funeral home to act for you with the Medical Examiner-Coroner's Office.

FINDING OUT THE CAUSE OF DEATH

Call the Medical Examiner-Coroner's Office at (408) 793-1900. Usually the cause of death is determined by the late afternoon or the next business day following the death or discovery of the deceased. Inquiry into the cause of death may necessitate the performance of an autopsy. This surgical examination of the deceased by a Medical Examiner-Coroner will not interfere with viewing the body or subsequent funeral arrangements. The decision as to whether to perform an autopsy will be at the discretion of the doctor performing the examination.

Cases involving blood tests or microscopic examinations take longer. This may cause a delay of up to twelve weeks or longer to receive a cause of death. These tests will not delay the decedent's release to a funeral home. If the cause of death cannot be immediately determined, a letter will be sent to the next-of-kin indicating this and a follow-up letter will be issued when the cause of death is determined. Our office will then issue an amendment to the death certificate.

ORGAN RETENTION FOR EXAMINATION

If it is determined that an autopsy is necessary to determine the cause and manner of death, organs may be retained by the Medical Examiner-Coroner's Office for further forensic analysis per the California Government Code Section 27491.45 which allows the Pathologist

DEALING WITH THE DEATH OF A LOVED ONE

to retain the organ(s) and if necessary to submit it/them to an outside laboratory for further analysis. If organ retention is necessary, every effort will be made to locate and advise the legal next-of-kin in a timely manner.

RECOVERING PERSONAL PROPERTY

Personal Property of the deceased may be claimed at the Medical Examiner-Coroner's Office during regular office hours. The next-of-kin must sign or authorize the funeral home or another person in writing to receive the possessions. The normal priority for the next-of-kin is spouse, child, parent and siblings.

OBTAINING COPIES OF RECORDS

The Medical Examiner-Coroner issues the original death certificate which is completed by the funeral home and then filed with the Vital Statistics section of the County Health Department. Certified copies of the death certificate and any amendments (issued when there are changes to the death certificate or when the original death certificate is pending) are available through your funeral home or directly from the County Recorder's Office - call (408) 299-5688. A fee is charged for each certified copy. Medical Examiner-Coroner records may be examined in the Office during regular business hours after the case has been completed and must be scheduled with the office in advance. A fee is charged only if you wish to purchase copies of the autopsy examination reports.

MISCELLANEOUS INFORMATION

Identification and viewing: Contrary to popular belief, it is not usually required or advised for the next-of-kin to come to the office to view the decedent. We will work with the funeral home to expedite the release of the body for viewing purposes.

Veterans: Persons honorably discharged from the Armed Services may be entitled to a Veteran's burial. Contact the local Veterans' Affairs Office for more information.

Insufficient funds: If the estate does not have sufficient funds to cover the costs of disposition of the remains and you are unable to assume financial responsibility, you may apply for indigent disposition at our office. Please call our office and ask to speak to an investigator.

OTHER RESOURCES

Bill Wilson Center 24 Hr. Crisis Line (408) 850-6125
Daytime Support (408) 553-6950
Cal Highway Patrol-San Jose Office (408) 467-5400
California Medical Board 1-916-263-2424
Cal Victim Compensation Board 1-800-777-9229
KARA Grief Support 1-650-321-5272
Legal Aid Society (408) 998-5200
Santa Clara County Clerk-Recorder (408) 299-5688
Santa Clara County District Attorney (408) 299-7400
Santa Clara Co. Public Administrator (408) 755-7610
Santa Clara Co. Public Health Dept.
Vital Records & Registration (408) 885-2010
Santa Clara County Sheriff Dept. (408) 808-4400
Santa Clara County Suicide & Crisis
Hotline 1-855-278-4204
San Jose Police Dept. (408) 277-8900
Social Security Administration 1-800-772-1213
United Way Bay Area (408) 247-1200
Veterans Affairs 1-800-827-1000
Victim Witness Assistance Center (408) 295-2656
Trauma Scene Waste Management Practitioners
<https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CEH/DRSEM/CDPH%20Document%20Library/EMB/MedicalWaste/Practitioners112618.pdf>

FOR MORE INFORMATION

If you have questions or need further assistance, please visit our website or contact the Medical Examiner-Coroner's Office at (408) 793-1900. Staff is on duty 24 hours a day. Questions about older cases or questions that involve extensive research can best be answered during regular office hours-

**Monday-Friday 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.
(except holidays)**

**Please visit our website at
www.scc-mec.org**