



Marin County Sheriff's Office Coroner Death Investigation for Patrol

A. Introduction

1. Welcome
2. Define course objectives
3. Course outline
4. Organizational structure, hours of operation, scope of operations.

B. Roles, functions, and interoperability of Coroner and Patrol Division

1. What is the role of the Patrol Division
2. The Patrol Division Investigative Team
 - a. Deputy Sheriff
 - b. Sheriff's Sergeant
 - c. Duty to investigate
 - d. Responsibility of Patrol
 - e. Patrol Instructional Guide
 - f. Patrol Death Investigation Policy
 - g. Patrol Paperwork
 - h. Patrol Referrals
 - i. Types of cases to refer to Coroner Division
3. What does that leave for patrol?
 - a. Natural deaths
 - b. Handoffs
4. What is the role of the Coroner's Division?
5. The Coroner's Division Investigative Team
 - a. Sheriff/Coroner
 - b. Coroner Investigator
 - c. Coroner Supervisor
 - d. Forensic Pathologist
6. Laws supporting/defining the role of the Coroner
7. Responsibilities of the Coroner

8. Duty to investigate
9. Cause and manner (mode) of death
 - a. Who determines cause and manner
10. Manners of death
 - a. Natural
 - b. Accident
 - c. Homicide
 1. Death investigation definition different than criminal investigation
 - d. Suicide
 - e. Undetermined
 1. Death investigator vs. criminal investigator

C. Basic Anatomy and Physiology

1. Photographic Autopsy Exam

D. Patrol Response

1. Patrol Investigation:
 - a. S.O. jurisdiction deaths
 - b. Deputy will handle from initial period response to completion of coroner duties
 - c. All other jurisdiction deaths
 - d. Beat deputies closest to jurisdiction to handle call
 - e. Hospital/Hospice/Care Homes
 - f. Medical misadventure
 - g. Maltreatment
 - h. Trauma may trigger investigation by a separate county LE agency (ex. Sonoma, Napa)
 - i. Obtain names of medical personnel who treated decedent
 - j. View the body and ask questions
 - k. Do the facts fit the circumstances
2. Medical Terminology
 - a. Based on “Latin”
 - b. Generally have prefix and suffix combined
3. Analysis of the signs of death
 - a. Livor Mortis (Lividity) – Blood settles
 - b. Rigor Mortis – Muscles stiffens
 - c. Algor Mortis – Temperature declines
 - d. Obvious signs of trauma
 - e. Keep in mind trauma may have been caused by resuscitative efforts
 - f. Medical Procedures
 - g. Decomposition
 - h. Carefully observe and cautiously interpret
 - i. Can set very quickly with excess pre-death activity, such as exercise fighting, panicked swimming, etc.

- j. Heat will speed up the process and cold will slow it down
 - k. Seizure disorders will also have an accelerated onset
 - l. Decedents
 - m. Name of decedent
 - n. Who are the next of kin
 - o. Time pronounced dead (obtain name of all medical personnel involved and run sheet)
 - p. Decedent's primary care physician and visit date
 - q. Medical history and medication commonly used
 - r. Drug and alcohol history
 - s. Will or living trust
 - t. Locate and identify was the last person to see decedent alive
 - u. What was their relationship to the decedents
 - v. Obtain statement – did they see death occur, do they know of any medical history, do they know of any depressed statement
 - w. Initial Scene Examination and Documentation
 - x. Initial assessment
 - y. Work from the decedent out
 - z. Environmental conditions
 - 1. Lights on/off
 - 2. Room temp
 - 3. Windows open/closed
 - 4. Blinds/Curtains open/closed
4. Photograph the scene prior to disturbing anything and the conducting comprehensive examination work from outside toward the decedent
 5. Comprehensive Scene Examination and Documentation
 - a. Thorough search of scene for property/evidence
 - b. Photograph items in place prior to collection
 - c. Collect property/evidence
 - d. Items collected from separate areas should be packaged separately
 - e. All prescription medications for decedent shall be collected
 - f. All prescription medications located shall be collected if decedent is single occupant of premises
 6. Suspicious deaths
 - a. Refer to pocket guide
 - b. Assess the scene before requesting a Coroner's Investigator
 - c. Document the scene
 - d. Check the body
 - e. Take photographs (start away from the body and work towards the body)
 - f. Are the factors consistent with what you are observing
 - g. Is there anything that doesn't seem to fit the facts
 - h. Is there blood at the scene – if so, where did it come from
 - i. Can it be explained as something related to a medical concern

- j. Is there any visible trauma – Can the trauma be explained
 - k. Is there anything out of place at the scene – Any signs of ransacking or a struggle
 - l. Are there any signs the body or the scene has been tampered with prior to LE arrival
 - m. Found remains
 - n. Burial site
 - o. California Native American Heritage Commission
 - p. 48 hour rule
7. Death Notification
 - a. Ensure you have determine the correct identity of the decedent
 - b. Reasonable attempts must be made to locate family
 - c. Who is notified
 - d. Manner of notification
 - e. Do you have a support network available for the family
 - f. Release of property to family
 8. Wound description
 - a. Be cautious when describing a wound in a report
 - b. Entry and exit bullet wounds may look identical on the exterior body. The pathologist will draw that conclusion in the autopsy – you should not in the field
 - c. Be aware of bodily fluids/purge coming from the nose or mouth does not necessarily indicate a violent death. It often accompanies natural death
 9. Call-Out procedures
 - a. Contact your sergeant
 - b. Sergeant will evaluate the scene and determine if Coroner Investigator is required
 - c. Field sergeant will then contact the Coroner sergeant to discuss the case and a decision on response will be made on appropriateness of the response with policy in mind
 - d. Coroner Investigator will respond in a timely manner if activated

E. Removal and Reporting

1. What the disposition of the decedent will be
 - a. Release the decedent to family at the scene
 - b. Do the circumstances of the death support a release or require further Coroner's Division follow-up
 - c. Request removal service for transport to mortuary
 - d. Secure body bag prior to transport
2. Notate time of request, time of arrival, and time of departure for transport services
 - a. MCSO jurisdiction reporting
 - b. Patrol deputy will be utilizing both hats (criminal/death inv.)
 - c. Will require full ARS report
 - d. Exceptions are Hospice and Hospital deaths

3. Emergency room deaths need to be reviewed to determine if local law enforcement agency where circumstances causing death need to be notified
4. Allied agency MCSO reporting
 - a. Patrol deputy will be utilizing death investigation hat only
 - b. Will require allied agency reporting form
 1. Handwritten
5. Completion of reports
 - a. All reports must be completed prior to the end of shift
 - b. All reports, property, and evidence must be transferred to Coroner's Division prior to the end of shift