

SETTLING OF ESTATE:

Most Financial Institutions will require and accept an **OFFICIAL PROOF OF DEATH** before claims and other dispositions may be settled. Insurance companies require documentation of the cause of death. In cases, where the Medical Examiner has investigated a death, neither the family doctor nor the hospital may complete any insurance documents.

There are **TWO DOCUMENTS**, which serve as **PROOF OF DEATH**.

1. Certificate of Death

This document is the official government certificate of death. Most firms accept this document as proof of death. It provides the name of the deceased, date of the death, place of death (city, town, village), marital status, regular residence (city, town, village), sex and age. It does not give the cause or manner of death. A certificate of death may be obtained through a local Registry.

****Please note these are not available from the ME's office.**

2. Certificate of Medical Examiner

This document provides the medical Cause and Manner of Death as well as a brief description of the circumstances.

The Office of the Medical Examiner will **NOT** provide a *Certificate of Medical Examiner* to any insurance company, financial institution or any person requesting one without written consent from a Next of Kin.

REQUEST FOR DOCUMENTS:

A letter will be mailed to you from the OCME after the death of your loved one.

This letter will give you instructions on how to order any documents that you may require as well as the associated costs.

ie: Certificate of Medical Examiner, Autopsy report, External Exam, Toxicology report etc.

An Insurance Company holding a policy on the deceased may require documents provided there is Next of Kin authorization.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

& ASSISTANCE:

If you need any further information, please call:

Office of the Chief Medical Examiner

4070 Bowness Road N.W.

Calgary, Alberta T3B 3R7

403.297.8123

or through our website:

www.ocme.ca



Sudden Death
&
The Role of the
Medical Examiner's
Office

The Office of the Chief Medical Examiners extends our condolences on the passing of your loved one.

ROLE OF THE MEDICAL EXAMINER'S OFFICE:

When DEATH occurs unexpectedly; cannot be explained or is injury related the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner conducts an investigation.

All such deaths in Alberta are investigated under the authority of the *Fatality Inquiries Act*. The investigation is held to determine the cause and circumstances of the death. In some cases, a public inquiry is held and recommendations are made to help prevent similar deaths.

Next of Kin may find this pamphlet helpful in explaining the steps, which must be taken in carrying out an investigation. Information is also presented for your guidance in settling an estate in the event that the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner has investigated the death.

WHY IS AN INVESTIGATION NECESSARY?

Alberta law does not permit a doctor to sign a death certificate if the cause of death is not clear or if the death is not due to natural illness. The purpose of the investigation is to determine the identity of the person, the date and place of death and circumstances such as the Cause and Manner of the Death.

The cooperation and assistance of next of kin and all others concerned is appreciated.

NEXT STEPS: AUTOPSY OR EXTERNAL EXAM

When reasonable doubt about the medical Cause of Death exists, an **AUTOPSY** may be authorized by the Medical Examiner. Permission of Next of Kin is **NOT** required.

An autopsy may include complex laboratory tests, so it may be months before results are known. If an exam (autopsy or external exam) is required, the body will be transported to the Medical Examiner's office in Calgary.

In cases where an autopsy is not necessary, an **EXTERNAL EXAMINATION** is performed.

EXAM RESULTS:

Once the exam is complete, one of the Investigators will call you following the exam to provide you with the results: *They will be able to tell you results findings, plus if an additional testing has been done that will delay determining the final Cause of Death.

*If additional testing is done (toxicology, histology etc); the investigator will give you a call with the final Cause of Death when all the tests are back and reviewed by the Medical Examiner, which typically takes **months**, but may take longer in difficult case or a child's death.

RELEASE OF YOUR LOVED ONE:

Typically we are able to release your loved one later in the afternoon on the day of their exam.

We encourage you to contact a *Funeral Home* of your choice as soon as possible to facilitate the release of your loved one.

WHAT DO THESE SERVICES COST?

There is no charge for the investigation. The Office of the Chief Medical Examiner pays for all transportation costs. You are encouraged to discuss any concern over a transportation cost with our office if you receive a bill for transportation of the deceased.

WILL THERE BE A PUBLIC FATALITY INQUIRY?

Certain cases are reviewed by a three-member board, which decides if a Fatality Inquiry should be held.

Public fatality inquiries are not required for all deaths. Their mandate is to offer recommendations for the prevention of similar incidents. Findings of legal responsibility or any other conclusion of law are not permitted.

2016.06 (OCME(jg))