

# DEATH INVESTIGATOR

## **JOB PURPOSE AND SUMMARY**

The Death Investigator is responsible for the objective investigation of the circumstances of unnatural and/or unattended deaths. The work includes observing, evaluating, and documenting death scenes.

The work of the Death Investigator includes but is not limited to the use of digital photography; scene description (written summary and diagram); interviewing witnesses and others persons; collecting and summarizing information regarding the decedent from a variety of sources; lifting, loading, and transportation of human remains; and notification of next of kin. Death Investigators may be the first official to contact the family of the decedent and as such, are required to be sensitive and exhibit an understanding of the initial grieving process. The Death Investigator compiles the investigative information regarding the death and prepares an investigative report for review and approval by the Medical Examiner.

## **CLASSIFICATION DISTINCTIONS**

This is a single level classification within the Medical Examiner's Office. The work supports the efforts of the Medical Examiner by assisting the Medical Examiner in death investigations and preparing investigative reports. The work is distinguished from the Autopsy Assistant by the additional core duties of field investigation, data collection, report writing, and interaction with witnesses and families. The Death Investigator, on an as needed basis rather than as a routine component of the work, provides assistance with autopsies.

## **KEY OR TYPICAL TASKS OR RESPONSIBILITIES** (including but not limited to the following):

- Receives notification of deaths, determines jurisdiction within the Medical Examiner's Office standard guidelines.
- Responds to investigate death; drives to death scenes to perform initial on-scene examination of remains; takes digital images; records scene observations (written summary and diagram); interviews witnesses; collects, preserves and transports evidence; and obtains demographic information that is pertinent to the cause and manner of death and death certificate completion.
- Interacts with healthcare practitioners to obtain confidential medical history and records of the decedent. Reviews medical records of the decedent.
- Interacts with law enforcement officials in the appropriate exchange of investigative information related to death investigations.

- Lifts and loads human remains onto a gurney for transport from death scenes, hospitals, and other care facilities and transports remains to the Medical Examiner's Office. Lift and remove loaded gurney from transport vehicle.
- Identifies and locates next of kin or legal representative of the decedent and makes death notifications; removes personal items from body, catalogues and secures personal items for later release to family or appropriate representative of the decedent.
- Performs thorough investigations and prepares clear, concise, and comprehensive investigative reports of the circumstances of the death, social and medical history, and other information relevant to the death; and performs follow-up investigations to obtain additional information needed for finalization of investigative reports.
- Answers telephones within the Medical Examiner's Office responding to questions from the public, medical professionals, law enforcement, and families.
- Impartially facilitates disposition of remains through consultation with families, funeral homes, and others.
- Provides pre-trial interviews, depositions, and court testimony.
- Assists in autopsies on an as needed basis.

## **QUALIFICATIONS**

### **Experience and Training:**

An Associate's Degree is required with work experience performing criminal, civil, and/or death investigations. A Bachelor's Degree is preferred with work experience performing criminal, civil, and/or death investigations. Any equivalent combination of education or experience in medical, criminal justice, or related fields that would demonstrate the ability to perform the requirements of the position will be considered.

### **Special Requirements:**

Possession of a valid driver's license unrestricted except as to vision from state of residence and evidence of a safe driving record.

Successfully pass a background investigation (including a criminal records check and fingerprinting), drug screen, physical abilities test, and psychological examination.

Carry an employer-issued cell phone and pager while on shift.

Work as a team member and independently utilize strong decision making and critical thinking skills that are within the scope of this position.

Work variable shifts to include: nights, afternoons, days, holidays, weekends, and emergency situations. May be on on-call status 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Must possess or attain American Board of Medicolegal Death Investigator (ABMDI) Registry Certification within 24 months of date of appointment to position.

**Knowledge of:** interviewing, criminal investigation and identification procedures and techniques; methods, practices, equipment and procedures involved in handling human remains; human anatomy and physiological functions of the human body; data collection, report writing principles; procedures necessary to prepare a body for autopsy and to assist during an autopsy; pertinent federal, state and local laws, codes, and regulations.

**Ability to:** communicate clearly and effectively both orally and in writing; prepare clear, concise but thorough, grammatically correct written reports; work in an unpredictable environment that may be at times stressful and exhibit appropriate sensitivity in situations involving relatives and friends of decedents; gather, verify, compile and evaluate information and other data; evaluate and preserve evidence that would assist the Medical Examiner in providing an opinion concerning the cause and manner of death; provide effective and credible courtroom testimony; appropriately manage the emotional burden of repetitive exposure to death and human remains in various stages of decomposition, disease, and trauma; maintain the confidentiality and integrity of information; establish and maintain effective working relationships with those contacted in the course of work; proficiently keyboard and use computer software applications including Microsoft Word, Outlook, Internet Explorer, and various search engines; operate other related office equipment.

## **WORK ENVIRONMENT AND PHYSICAL DEMANDS**

The work of the Investigator is performed both within an office and in the field and requires the incumbent to handle human remains on a regular basis. The work is physically demanding requiring lifting/pushing/pulling while simultaneously climbing up or down stairs or maneuvering difficult terrain to move bodies in excess of 100 pounds, in various degrees of decay, mutilation, infestation, and disease on a regular basis; and bending, reaching, stooping, climbing, crawling, and crouching while observing and cataloguing information at the death scene. The work requires the extrication of bodies from potentially complicated death scenes, in all types of terrain, under adverse conditions, and exposure to inclement weather conditions. Investigators are required to be available on a 24-hour rotating and scheduled-basis, call responsive within 15 minutes, and arrive at death scene without delay. The Investigator must be able to drive safely at night and in inclement weather conditions. The work involves heightened risk of exposure to bloodborne pathogens and toxic chemicals, infectious diseases. The work environment can be stressful and/or unpredictable and requires demonstrated emotional control and interpersonal skills when communicating with family members and witnesses who may be in the initial stages of grief, mentally ill, or under the influence of drugs or intoxicants. Investigators are expected to read and interpret information and draw logical conclusions. Manual dexterity is required both for the operation of office equipment and the equipment utilized to remove and transport bodies.

Office use: 01/29/01  
Revised: 09/12/2017, 2/18/2020