

Q WHAT IS MY NEXT STEP?

A You should select a funeral home to make final arrangements. The funeral home representative and the Office of the Weld County Coroner/Medical Examiner will coordinate with each other in order to facilitate these arrangements and to eliminate possible delays.

Q WHICH DEATHS MUST BE EXAMINED?

A The Coroner/Medical Examiner is required by law to investigate all deaths (1) that occur outside a physician's care; (2) that are sudden or unexpected; (3) that cannot be ascertained to be a natural death by documented medical history and circumstances. The involvement of the Coroner/Medical Examiner does not mean that an autopsy will automatically be performed.

Q IF SOMEONE'S DEATH APPEARS TO BE NATURAL, WHY IS THE CORONER/MEDICAL EXAMINER INVOLVED?

A The Coroner/Medical Examiner may take jurisdiction over an apparently natural death if (1) the death was unexpected and no medical cause can be determined; (2) the decedent was not under the care of a physician, and/or there is no prior documented medical history to explain the death; (3) the death might be a public health hazard; (4) there are extenuating and/or suspicious circumstances associated with the death.

Q WHAT IS AN AUTOPSY AND IS IT REALLY NECESSARY?

A An autopsy is the examination of the body to determine cause and manner of death. It is similar to a surgical procedure. Often, an autopsy can reveal an undiagnosed disease process or abnormality. It may also detect a genetic disorder that could be inherited by surviving family members. In an accidental death, the question of how a disease process contributed to

the accident (if at all) must be answered. Often insurance companies will deny payment of benefits until the autopsy results are available. If the death is due to apparent natural causes and there is sufficient evidence of a pre-existing illness or medical condition, an autopsy may not be necessary. However, if there is any question that the death may be due to "other than natural causes", an autopsy will be performed. In an obviously traumatic death, the cause of death may appear obvious; however, there may be contributing, underlying factors. Again, the insurance companies may deny benefits until they receive the autopsy results.

Q WILL AUTOPSY REPORTS BE AVAILABLE?

A Yes. On-line request

http://www.co.weld.co.us/departments/coroner/coroner_contact.cfm

or by submitting a written request to the Weld County Coroner's Office, 905 10th Street, Greeley, CO, 80631. (You may also fax the request to 970-392-4546). *Please include the decedent's name as well as your name, address and relationship.* One courtesy copy is given to family. All others requisites must pre-pay at a rate of \$.25 per page.

Q WHAT IF I DISAGREE WITH THE CORONER'S/MEDICAL EXAMINER'S DECISION TO DO OR NOT TO DO AN AUTOPSY?

A Colorado law (CRS 30-10-606) provides the authority for the Coroner/Medical Examiner to perform an autopsy as part of an investigation. We use the following guidelines:

1) If the autopsy is deemed unnecessary for the investigation, it will not be performed. By law, an autopsy cannot be performed by the Coroner/Medical Examiner solely for "medical curiosity". If the family or doctor would like a medical curiosity autopsy to be performed, it must be arranged by the family or by the doctor with the family's permission, and be done by the Pathologist of your choice. You should be aware that the financial responsibility falls upon the requesting party and an autopsy can be quite expensive.

2) If the Coroner/Medical Examiner deems it necessary to perform an autopsy as part of the investigation, the law grants us the ability to take jurisdiction of the body to perform the autopsy. There is no charge for an autopsy conducted under these circumstances.

3) If you or your family should disagree with our decision to perform an autopsy in spite of the benefits and the questions it will answer, you must obtain a Court Order through your attorney to prevent the autopsy from taking place. All legal financial obligations incurred are your responsibility.

Q WHAT ABOUT TISSUE/ORGAN DONATION?

A The approval of the Coroner's/Medical Examiner's Office is required for tissue/organ donation for deaths that are under the auspices of the coroner's jurisdiction. Only the heart valves, skin, long bones and corneas can be donated after a person has died. Persons on life support may be eligible for more extensive tissue procurement. With next of kin consent, the family's wishes for donation will be evaluated on a case by case basis.

Q HOW IS LEGAL NEXT OF KIN DETERMINED?

A Next of kin is defined as one of the following persons:

- 1) Spouse (including common law)
- 2) Children 18 and older (stepchildren included)
- 3) Guardians of children under 18
- 4) Parents
- 5) Siblings

Q HOW DO I OBTAIN THE CLOTHING, PERSONAL EFFECTS AND OTHER ITEMS TAKEN INTO EVIDENCE?

A All personal property is released with the body to the funeral home to be given back to the family following an autopsy. The exceptions are as follows:

1) In suicides, if a weapon is involved, separate arrangements for its release must be made through the Coroner/Medical Examiner.

2) If a crime was committed by or against the decedent (homicide), all clothing and personal effects are generally retained as evidence by the investigating law enforcement agency.

3) In all cases, the decedent's Driver's License or similar photo ID is taken by the Coroner/Medical Examiner as means to make a positive identification. The license not only contains the photograph of the decedent, but the registration number to access the decedent's fingerprint information. The license is property of the State and was issued to, and for use only by, the decedent. Therefore, it is retained as a permanent part of the investigative file. A color copy can be made and sent to the family at their request.

Q WILL I BE CHARGED FOR OTHER CORONER SERVICES?

A The Office of the Weld County Coroner/Medical Examiner does not assess any fees, other than those for processing requested autopsy reports.

Q WHERE DO I OBTAIN THE DEATH CERTIFICATE?

A Death certificates are filed by the funeral director at the county health department in the county where death was pronounced. Should you require certified copies, they may be ordered from the funeral director. Copies may also be obtained from the County or State Department of Vital Statistics.

We trust that the advice and counseling provided by your funeral director and the information provided in this pamphlet will be of help. However, should you need additional assistance, please telephone our office at 970-392-4545.

SERVICES PROVIDED TO YOU

WELD COUNTY MORTUARIES:

Adamson Memorial Chapels	970-353-1212
Ahlberg Funeral & Crematory	970-776-2313
Allnutt Funeral & Cremation Services	970-352-3366
Allnutt-Hunter Chapel	970-667-1121
Carrol-Lewellen Funeral & Cremation	303-776-4477
Howe Mort. & Cremation Services	303-776-2434
Erlinger Burial & Cremation Service	303-452-3133
Kibbey-Fishburn Funeral Home	970-667-5885
Mark's Funeral & Cremation Services	970-686-9525
Moser Funeral & Cremation Services	970-330-6824
Northern Colorado Crematory	970-351-0130
Paul's Funeral (Funeraria Acuna)	970-405-9092
Resthaven Funeral Home	970-667-0202
Stoddard Funeral Home	970-330-7301
Tabor-Rice Funeral	303-654-0112

CLEANING SERVICES:

Aftermath, Inc.	1-866-942-6583
Bio-Clean of Colorado	
970-686-5015 or Emerg.	970-215-2540
Bio-Tec Emergency Services	1-888-246-9111
Crime Scene Cleaners, Inc.	720-436-4162
Exceptional Services	303-910-3593
Mobile Trauma Cleaners	970-227-3957
Paul Davis Restoration	970-221-1281
ProDecon Biohazard Solutions	1-800-687-1493
Rapid Response, Inc.	970-3882842 or 277-2848 (cell)
Trauma Restoration and Clean-up	
970-330-8722 or 970-396-0665 (cell)	
Trauma Clear	970-222-9352 or 970-217-5155

OFFICE OF THE WELD COUNTY CORONER/ MEDICAL EXAMINER



ANSWERS TO FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

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Coroner/Medical Examiner

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Fax: 970-392-4546

WEBSITE:

<http://www.co.weld.co.us/departments/coroner/index.html>