

## Death Investigation

<b>Effective Date:</b>	09/08/2020
<b>Revised Date:</b>	12/17/2025
<b>Issuing Authority:</b>	

### 417.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

The purpose of this policy is to provide guidelines for situations where officers initially respond to and investigate the circumstances of a deceased person.

Some causes of death may not be readily apparent and some cases differ substantially from what they appear to be initially. The thoroughness of death investigations and use of appropriate resources and evidence gathering techniques is critical.

### 417.2 INVESTIGATION CONSIDERATIONS

Emergency medical services shall be called in all suspected death cases unless death is obvious (e.g., decapitated, decomposed).

A supervisor shall be notified as soon as possible to assist and provide appropriate personnel and resources. The on-scene supervisor should determine whether follow-up investigation is required and notify the Criminal Investigations Division Commander as necessary. The Patrol Sergeant will make notification to command staff in accordance with the Major Incident Notification Policy.

Only officers who have successfully completed the Illinois Law Enforcement Training and Standards Board (ILETSB) program in death and homicide investigations or who have been granted a waiver by the board shall be assigned as lead investigators on any death or homicide investigation (50 ILCS 705/10.11).

#### 417.2.1 MEDICAL EXAMINER

Officers are not authorized to pronounce death unless they are also Medical Examiners, Deputy, Medical Examiners, or appointed Medical Examiner investigators. The Medical Examiner shall be called in all sudden or unexpected deaths or deaths due to other than natural causes. State law requires that the [MedicalExaminer/JOP] be notified in any of the following cases (55 ILCS 5/3-3013):

- (a) A sudden or violent death, whether apparently suicidal, homicidal, or accidental.
- (b) A death due to a sex crime.
- (c) A death where the circumstances are suspicious, obscure, mysterious, or otherwise unexplained or where, in the written opinion of the attending physician, the cause of death is not determined.
- (d) A death where addiction to alcohol or to any drug may have been a contributory cause.
- (e) A death where the decedent was not attended by a licensed physician.

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The body shall not be disturbed or moved from the position or place of death without permission of the Medical Examiner.

#### 417.2.2 SEARCHING DEAD BODIES

- (a) The Medical Examiner, their assistant, and authorized investigators are generally the only persons permitted to move, handle, or search a dead body.
- (b) An officer may make a reasonable search of an individual who it is reasonable to believe is dead, or near death, for the purpose of identification or for information identifying the individual as an anatomical donor, with the permission of the (55 ILCS 5/3-3019). If a donor document is located, the Medical Examiner or their assistant shall be promptly notified.
- (c) The Medical Examiner, with the permission of the Alsip Police Department, may take property, objects, or articles found on the deceased or in the immediate vicinity of the deceased that may be necessary for conducting an investigation to determine the identity of the deceased or the cause or manner of death.
- (d) Should exigent circumstances indicate to an officer that any other search of a known dead body is warranted prior to the arrival of the Medical Examiner or their assistant, the investigating officer should first obtain verbal consent from the Medical Examiner or their assistant when practicable (55 ILCS 5/3-3019).
- (e) Whenever reasonably possible, a witness, preferably a relative to the deceased or a member of the household, should be requested to remain nearby the scene and available to the officer pending the arrival of Medical Examiner the or their assistant. The name and address of this person shall be included in the narrative of the death report.
- (f) Whenever personal effects are removed from the body of the deceased by the Medical Examiner or their assistant, a receipt shall be obtained. This receipt shall be attached to the death report.

#### 417.2.3 DEATH NOTIFICATION

When practical, and if not handled by the Medical Examiner's Office, notification to the next-of-kin of the deceased person shall be made, in person, by the officer assigned to the incident. If the next-of-kin lives in another jurisdiction, a law enforcement official from that jurisdiction shall be requested to make the personal notification. If the relatives live outside this county, the Coroner or Medical Examiner may be requested to make the notification. The Medical Examiner needs to know if notification has been made. Assigned detectives may need to talk to the next-of-kin.

#### 417.2.4 UNIDENTIFIED DEAD BODIES

If the identity of a dead body cannot be established after the Medical Examiner arrives, the Medical Examiner's office will issue a "John Doe" or "Jane Doe" number for the report.

#### 417.2.5 DEATH INVESTIGATION REPORTING

All incidents involving a death shall be documented on the appropriate form.

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#### **417.2.6 SUSPECTED HOMICIDE**

If the initially assigned officer suspects that the death involves a homicide or other suspicious circumstances, the officer shall take steps to protect the scene. The Investigation Unit shall be notified to determine the possible need for an investigator to respond to the scene.

If the on-scene supervisor, through consultation with the Patrol Sergeant or Investigation Unit supervisor, is unable to determine the manner of death, the investigation shall proceed as though it is a homicide.

The investigator assigned to investigate a homicide or death that occurred under suspicious circumstances may, with the approval of their supervisor, request the Medical Examiner to conduct physical examinations and tests, and to provide a report.

#### **417.2.7 REPORTING**

All incidents involving a death shall be documented on the appropriate form.

#### **417.2.8 EMPLOYMENT-RELATED DEATHS OR INJURIES**

Any member of this [department/office] who responds to and determines that a death, serious illness, or serious injury has occurred as a result of an accident at or in connection with the victim's employment should ensure that the regional Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) office is notified of all pertinent information.

#### **417.3 SPECIMEN SUBMISSION**

As soon as possible, but no later than 30 days after receipt of any blood, buccal, or tissue specimen from the [MedicalExaminer/JOP], the Criminal Investigations Lieutenant shall ensure the specimen and department case number is submitted to an approved National DNA Index System (NDIS) participating laboratory within this state for analysis and categorizing into genetic marker groupings and that the results are submitted to the Illinois State Police (55 ILCS 5/3-3013).

#### **417.4 UNUSED MEDICATIONS**

If an officer collects any unused prescription medication at the scene of a death investigation, the officer shall (210 ILCS 150/18(g)):

- (a) Document the number or amount of medication to be disposed of.
- (b) If the medication is collected as evidence, photograph the unused medication and its container or packaging, if available, and include the photograph and documentation with the report.

#### **417.5 POLICY**

It is the policy of the Alsip Police Department to respond, document, and investigate incidents where a person is deceased. Investigations involving the death of a person, including those from natural causes, accidents, workplace incidents, suicide, and homicide, shall be initiated, conducted, and properly documented.

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### **417.6 UNIDENTIFIED DEAD BODY**

If the identity of a dead body cannot be established, the handling officer will request from the Medical Examiner a unique identifying number for the body. The number shall be included in any report.

The assigned officer, as necessary, shall create an unidentified person record in the National Missing and Unidentified Persons System as required by law (50 ILCS 722/20).

The assigned officer, as necessary, shall create a National Crime Information Center (NCIC) Unidentified Person record as required by law. The assigned officer will obtain the NCIC number and maintain it in the case file (50 ILCS 722/20).

### **417.7 DEATH NOTIFICATION**

When reasonably practicable, and if not handled by the Medical Examiner's Office, notification to the next-of-kin of the deceased person shall be made, in person, by the officer assigned to the incident. If the next-of-kin lives in another jurisdiction, a law enforcement official from that jurisdiction shall be requested to make the personal notification.

If a deceased person has been identified as a missing person, this Alsip Police Department shall attempt to locate family members and inform them of the death and location of the deceased missing person's remains. All efforts to locate and notify family members shall be recorded in appropriate reports.