

Waltham Police Department

SUDDEN DEATH

CHAPTER 93

General Order Number: GO-01 2009

Effective Date: 01/2009, 12/2023

POLICY:

It shall be the policy of the Waltham Police Department to make all appropriate notifications promptly and to conduct preliminary death investigations in a thorough and professional manner.

PROCEDURES:

1. **NOTIFICATIONS:** The Medical Examiner's Office, State Police CPAC Unit, and the Investigation Division shall be notified when a death occurs in all instances with one exception:

When a death occurs while the decedent is on hospice, a DNR/MOLST is on scene, and a medical professional is present.

2. **PRELIMINARY INVESTIGATION OF A SUDDEN DEATH:** Preliminary investigating officer(s) at the scene shall document all facts relevant to appearance, condition, and position of the body, and all facts as to the cause and circumstances of death.
 - a. The Commanding Officer - Platoon on Duty shall ensure a Patrol Supervisor is assigned to the scene, and that all required notifications are made.
 - b. When applicable additional notifications may be required such as:
 1. **WORK-RELATED FATALITY:** The Department of Labor Standards at (508) 616-0461, The Massachusetts Department of Public Health at (800) 338-5223 and OSHA at (800) 321-6742.
 2. **MOTOR VEHICLE FATALITY:** The District Attorney's Office at (617) 756-3670.
 - c. Upon responding to the scene of a death, the Patrol Supervisor shall ensure that the body is not moved and the scene is not disturbed, until the medical examiner or the representative of the district attorney's office either arrives at the scene or gives directions as to what shall be done at the scene and for the removal of the body.

- d. When the Commanding Officer - Platoon on Duty is unable to contact the medical examiner, he or she shall notify the Chief Medical Examiner and seek telephone removal authority as above. If neither the medical examiner nor the headquarters office can be contacted, the Officer in Charge - Platoon on Duty or the representative of the district attorney may authorize transfer of the body to the regional medical examiner's office or to a funeral home. Copies of all documents, including names and addresses of all known witnesses, will be sent to the medical examiner. In situations where the body is transferred to a funeral home, the funeral home director shall be notified of the possibility of an autopsy.
- e. In situations where the Medical Examiner is unable to respond, the assigned Patrol Supervisor shall:
 - 1. Ensure that all facts are documented relevant to appearance, condition, and position of the body, and every fact and circumstance tending to show the cause and circumstances of death;
 - 2. Seek telephone authority for removal of the body from the Medical Examiner or the Chief Medical Examiner;
 - 3. Notify next of kin, if known, or cause them to be notified, that this department is taking jurisdiction of the body and of the next location to which the deceased person will be taken.

3. **NOTIFICATION TO FAMILIES REGARDING DEATH OR EMERGENCIES:**

- a. During the course of duty, officers may be required to make notifications of death and emergency situations to family members. Officers making these notifications must be aware of the impact these notifications have on family members.
- b. Officers may use the services of clergy, a relative, or close family friend. The help of these individuals may lessen the impact such news may have on the part of the recipient. Officers should convey these notifications in a prompt, compassionate and considerate manner, and be prepared to render appropriate assistance such as transporting family members to the hospital.
- c. There will be times that other agencies will request the services of our department to make death/emergency notifications. All such notifications/requests made by other agencies will be acted upon promptly and in a professional manner. Notifications should be made in person and not over the telephone whenever possible. If the victim is still alive and, in the hospital, the family should be told the extent of the injuries or emergency

situation. The family should be taken to any local hospital upon request. If the hospital is not local, officers should be prepared to provide necessary assistance and information.