

## B Division Operational Manual

### Part 41.3 Human Deaths

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(For information regarding this policy, contact "B" Division Criminal Operations.)

#### 1. POLICY

1. 1. All reportable deaths (see 2.3) will be investigated to rule out any suspicion of foul play.
1. 2. RCMP have the authority to investigate sudden deaths as mandated by the Provincial *Fatalities Investigations Act* and the Criminal Code.
1. 3. The *Fatalities Investigations Act* requires that whoever becomes aware of a reportable death, which occurs outside a medical facility, advise the Medical Examiner or a Medical Examiner's Investigator (including all members of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police). See Sec. 5 & Sec. 8 of *Fatalities Investigation Act*.  
**EXCEPTION:** Where no evidence of foul play exists and the death certificate is signed by a physician, there are no reporting requirements
1. 4. The RCMP are required to attend the scene of all deaths which occur outside a medical facility. **EXCEPTION:** the police need not attend if a doctor advises the police that they will sign the death certificate forthwith when a terminally ill patient is sent home with expectation of death in near future.
1. 5. When reasonable grounds do exist to believe a Criminal Code or federal statutory offence has occurred, **IMMEDIATELY** notify your Detachment Commander as judicial authorities will need to be reviewed to determine whether a search warrant or other judicial authority is required.
1. 6. Where there are no reasonable grounds to indicate a criminal offence has contributed to the cause of death of an individual, the RCMP have the authority to control the scene without warrant and seize the remains and other evidence pursuant to Section 12 of the *Fatalities Investigations Act*.
1. 7. When requested by the Medical Examiner, a member will assist the Medical Examiner in obtaining past medical history of the deceased, conducting interviews or carrying out other inquiries. These tasks are carried out in our role as Medical Examiner's Investigators under the direction of the Medical Examiner pursuant to the *Fatalities Investigations Act*.
1. 8. Members will not be required to attend autopsies for deaths where foul play is not suspected.

1. 9. If the pathologist conducting an autopsy discovers evidence of foul play, they will terminate the autopsy, secure the body, notify the detachment concerned and wait for a member to attend.

## 2. INVESTIGATION

### 2. 1. First Member At The Scene

2. 1. 1. refer to HQ OM41.3
2. 1. 2. **IMMEDIATELY** notify your Detachment/Unit Commander-OPS NCO of all sudden death investigations.

### 2. 2. Detachment Commander - OPS NCO

2. 2. 1. Upon being contacted by a member regarding a sudden death, satisfy yourself that the death is not suspicious, and that foul play has been ruled out;
2. 2. 2. Where there is an obvious homicide or suspected foul play;
  2. 2. 2. 1. ensure that an NCO or Person acting in that position attends the scene of the sudden death and provides direction as required;
  2. 2. 2. 2. notify the District Commander, District Advisory NCO, and District Policing Officer of the incident;
  2. 2. 2. 3. ensure the security of the scene is protected;
  2. 2. 2. 4. request MCU attend the scene (Refer B Division OM33.100);
  2. 2. 2. 5. designate an experienced member to take charge of the investigation and prepare reports on the investigation;
  2. 2. 2. 6. designate a member to be the exhibit person for the investigation.

### 2. 3. Reportable Deaths

2. 3. 1. Reportable deaths are as follows:
  2. 3. 1. 1. as a result of violence, accident or suicide;
  2. 3. 1. 2. unexpectedly when the person was in good health;
  2. 3. 1. 3. unexpectedly where the family doctor/attending medical practitioner **will not** or **is unable** to sign a death certificate;
  2. 3. 1. 4. where the person was not under the care of a physician;
  2. 3. 1. 5. where the cause of death was undetermined;
  2. 3. 1. 6. as a result of suspected negligent treatment by a person;
  2. 3. 1. 7. in custody (including a child in the custody of the Director of Child Welfare, or an individual detained under the *Mental Health Care and Treatment Act*).
2. 4. The family doctor/last attending medical practitioner **is to be consulted** in all sudden unexpected natural deaths in an attempt to determine medical history of deceased.
2. 5. In the event the family doctor/last attending medical practitioner signs off on the death certificate the death is considered **non-reportable** to the medical examiner.
2. 6. In **all** reportable cases, **IMMEDIATELY** contact the local Medical Examiner, identified in Appendix 41-3-1, or shown on the list of on-call Medical Examiners

provided by your Regional Health Care Corporation. The ME will decide if they will attend the scene.

2. 7. When **foul play** is **suspected** or the member is unable to contact the local Medical Examiner, contact the Chief Medical Examiner, identified in Appendix 41-3-1. At this time provide details of the death. (**Note:** the Chief Medical Examiner should be notified of ALL foul play deaths).
2. 8. Upon arrival at scene the member will take possession of the body, secure the scene and tag the body as an exhibit for identification purposes.
2. 9. The member, ambulance or health care professionals will pronounce obvious deaths at the scene.
2. 10. There is no requirement to request permission of the ME to remove the body from the scene.
2. 11. All medications are to be seized and a list of those medications to accompany the body. The medications will be forwarded to the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner in St. John's.
2. 12. Contact your local funeral service for body removal. An ambulance will only be used in exceptional circumstances.
2. 13. Complete a detailed scene investigation report, that includes an ME1, statements, photos, and file reports and **IMMEDIATELY** provide same to the local Medical Examiner with copies to the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner and Criminal Operations.
2. 14. Follow whatever other investigational guidance are provided by the local Medical Examiner.
2. 15. In a case where foul play is suspected, carry out an investigation under Criminal Code authority, utilizing assistance of specialized units as required.

### 3. DEATH ON AIRCRAFT

3. 1 See HQ Operation manual 41.3.8
3. 2. When report of death on a aircraft is received, contact Health Canada Quarantine office 24 hour emergency number: 902-873-7659

### 4. DEATH ON FOREIGN VESSEL

4. 1 When report of death on a foreign vessel is received, contact Public Health Canada Agency of Canada office 24 hour emergency number: 902-873-7659.

### 5. IN-CUSTODY DEATHS

5. 1 See HQ Operation Manual 19.5.

### 6. REPORTING

6. 1. Advise Criminal Operations Branch of all reportable sudden deaths which are attended. Reporting format as per "B" Div. Ops Man Part 101.1.2.
6. 2. Ensure a follow up report is forwarded once cause of death is determined. If additional reporting is required, you will be advised accordingly.
6. 3. When an individual is missing and presumed dead, the provisions of the *Fatalities Investigations Act* will apply. Individuals will be entered on CPIC and file maintained until the individual reaches the age noted in the CPIC manual.

## 7. EXHIBITS

7. 1. Original suicide notes and medications directly relating to the deceased will be forwarded to the Chief Medical Examiner at the following address:

Chief Medical Examiner  
Province of Newfoundland and Labrador  
Health Science Centre  
Level 1, Room 1562  
300 Prince Philip Drive  
St. John's, NL  
A1B 3V6

Exhibits can be forwarded in person or via Priority Post with acknowledgement of receipt.

7. 2 Do not forward medications to the Chief Medical Examiner in cases where the death certificate has been signed by a local doctor.
7. 2. 1. All non- narcotic medications can be disposed of through local medical facilities, pharmacies or by incineration.
- 7. 2. 2. All Narcotic medications must be disposed of through submission of form HCSC3515.**
7. 3. Return all remaining exhibits seized without warrant during the investigation, to the next of kin unless a relinquishment of claim has been signed on Form 1625. Destroy exhibits as per policy.

## 8. EXPENSES AND ACCOUNTS

8. 1. Except where the cause of death is attributed to foul play, all expenses are the responsibility of the Department of Justice.
8. 2. Provincial costs may be forwarded direct to the Department of Justice, or are paid on 1393 and recovered from the province by Regional Corporate Management.
8. 3. Ensure that provincial costs are clearly identified and are separate from investigational expenses.

## 9. FIREARMS ACCIDENT REPORTS

9. 1. If death occurs as result of a hunting shooting accident, complete firearms accident report in duplicate direct to:

Conservation Services Section  
Wildlife Division  
P.O. Box 2007  
117 Riverside Drive  
Corner Brook, NL  
A2H 7S1  
Attn: Chris Baldwin  
Telephone - 709-637-2020  
Fax - 709-637-2032  
email: [chrisbaldwin@gov.nl.ca](mailto:chrisbaldwin@gov.nl.ca)

## 10. RELEASE OF INFORMATION

10. 1 See HQ Operation Manual Part 27.2.

**11. FINGERPRINTING DECEASED PERSONS**

- 11. 1. Investigation involving a deceased person with a criminal record;
- 11. 1. 1. Do not fingerprint deceased person prior to an autopsy without the authority of the Medical Examiner.
- 11. 2. Investigations where it is deemed the death is not reportable;
- 11. 2. 1. Deceased with a criminal record can be fingerprinted.

**Amended:** 2013-01-28