

Where Can Copies of the Death Certificate Be Obtained?

Certified copies of death certificates can only be obtained from the Bureau of Vital Statistics of each respective health district. For information on how to obtain a copy of a death certificate in Summit County [CLICK HERE](#)

Why is a body brought to the Department of the Medical Examiner?

When a person expires from apparent criminal acts, violence, by accident, suicide, suddenly when in apparent good health, when unattended by a physician for a reasonable period of time, in detention, or in any suspicious or unusual manner, Ohio law requires the Medical Examiner/Coroner to investigate the death. Another reason that a body may be brought to the Medical Examiner's Department is that the identity of the deceased or next of kin may be unknown.

When is an autopsy performed?

Not all persons brought to the Medical Examiner's Department are autopsied. Certain cases are not autopsied when no "foul play" is suspected and evidence of a natural death is present. In other cases, where there is the possibility of legal proceedings, which may arise as a result of a homicide, accident, suicide, etc., an autopsy will be performed. In these cases, both positive and negative information is found which substantiates the ruling and cause of death as signed by the Medical Examiner.

Does the ME need permission from next of kin to perform an autopsy?

Ohio law (ORC 2108.52) provides that the Medical Examiner/Coroner does not need permission to perform an autopsy. The Department of the Medical Examiner will attempt to comply with the wishes of the next of kin, especially if there is a family religious interest and when this does not conflict with the duties of the Medical Examiner as charged by Ohio law.

What is an autopsy and is there a charge?

An autopsy is a systematic examination by a qualified physician respectful of a deceased person for the purpose of determining the cause of death and recovering from the body evidence of the cause of death. A record is made of the findings of the autopsy, including microscopic and toxicological laboratory tests. These laboratory tests are conducted after the release of the body to the next of kin for burial. There is no charge to the next of kin for an autopsy nor for any of the tests which may be conducted by the Medical Examiner's Department. However, if you wish to obtain a copy of our written reports, they can be purchased for a nominal fee. Please contact the Medical Examiner's Department at (330) 643-2101 for details about how to obtain these reports.

How will the body be released?

Routinely, the Medical Examiner's Department releases the body to a licensed funeral director. The next of kin of the deceased person should notify a funeral director who, in turn, will arrange for transportation of the deceased to the funeral home and obtain the necessary documents for burial or cremation.

How can a funeral director be selected?

Most often, the next of kin will discuss the selection of a funeral director with other family members, clergy, or friends. The Department of the Medical Examiner is prohibited from recommending a funeral director. A listing of funeral directors is available in the telephone book as well as other sources.

Where may the clothing of the deceased be obtained?

Usually the clothing of the deceased is forwarded to the funeral director for disposal. In cases of suspected homicide, various suicides, or accidental deaths, the clothing may be held by the Medical Examiner's Department or the investigating law enforcement agency for use as evidence.

How can relative obtain the property of the deceased?

The Medical Examiner shall notify any known relatives of the deceased person who meets death in the manner described by Sections 313.11 and 313.22 of the Ohio Revised Code by letter or otherwise. The next of kin, other relatives, or friends of the deceased person, in the order named, shall have prior right as to the disposition of the body of such a death. The Medical Examiner shall take charge and possession of all money, clothing, and other valuable personal effects of such deceased person, found in connection with or pertaining to such body, and shall secure such possessions in the Medical Examiner's Department or such other suitable place as is provided for such storage by the county council.

How long does it take for a death ruling to be made?

This procedure is handled differently by various Counties. In Summit County, in many cases, a signed death certificate accompanies the body when it is released by the Medical Examiner. When there is insufficient information available to complete the death certificate, a "Pending findings, facts, and verdict" death certificate is issued that accompanies the body. This death certificate enables the funeral services and burial to take place while additional chemical, microscopic slide preparation and examination, and other investigation continues. At the culmination of these tests and investigation, a ruling is made based on all available information. A supplemental death certificate is then issued with the cause of death and ruling which supersedes the "Pending" death certificate.

How can ME Department records be obtained?

The interested party should call the Medical Examiner's Department at (330) 643-2101, to obtain the procedure.

Will an autopsy disfigure the body and prevent an open casket funeral?

Necessary incisions used to perform the autopsy are easily covered by clothing and do not prevent open casket viewing.

