

TEL: 763-324-4400

WWW.MIDWESTMEDICALEXAMINER.COM

We hope the information in this brochure has been helpful for you and your family. If we can be of any assistance, please contact us. Our normal business hours are 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday.

**My loved one has died.
What do I do next?**

In this time of stress and sorrow, there are several decisions to make. Here are a few suggestions to help guide you and your loved ones through the process.

- ◆ Involve your family, friends and clergy for support. They can assist with decision making as you deal with this tragic and sometimes sudden news.
- ◆ Select a funeral home to assist you in making funeral arrangements and coordinating final disposition of your loved one's remains. If you do not know where to turn, you may wish to call a variety of funeral homes, ask questions, and obtain pricing. (Any funeral home can assist with cremation arrangements.)
- ◆ Once you have chosen a funeral home, the funeral director will make arrangements to transport your loved one's remains and property to the funeral home following the autopsy.
- ◆ Retain business cards, brochures, and paperwork given to you by law enforcement, medical examiner investigators, ambulance, and funeral home personnel.

**MIDWEST MEDICAL
EXAMINER'S OFFICE**

*Serving multiple counties in
Minnesota and Wisconsin.*

The death of a loved one can cause tremendous stress and sorrow. We hope this brochure will assist you during your grieving process and help answer questions about the autopsy process and the role of the Medical Examiner.

Why is the initial investigation such a lengthy process?

MMEO investigators are members of the community who are trained to respond to death scenes. They will respond from their homes and travel to the location of death, which can take some time. The investigator must then speak with family and friends, responding law enforcement, and examine the body. Resuscitative equipment must be left in place to explain possible marks or other artifacts of the equipment. We attempt to do our job with as little interference with your mourning process as possible. In rare situations of homicide or undetermined deaths, we may have to limit direct interaction with the body.

Where was the deceased taken?

The deceased was taken to the county morgue of the Midwest Medical Examiner at 14341 Rhinestone Street NW, Ramsey, MN 55303. During normal business hours phone calls can be directed to **763-324-4400**. After hours, on weekends, or holidays, phone messages should be directed to **763-324-4420** or via email to meinvestigator@co.anoka.mn.us. We will get back to you in a timely manner.

How long will this take?

Normally the deceased will need to remain in the morgue for approximately 24 hours. The autopsy rarely delays the release of the body to the next-of-kin, however, final results of the autopsy report may take weeks.

What is an autopsy?

An autopsy is an examination of the body to determine how and why someone died. The extent of an autopsy depends on circumstances and the decision is made by the pathologist at the time of examination. An exam may be limited to the external body surfaces, only; limited internally to a certain body region; or complete. X-rays may also be obtained.

A complete forensic autopsy includes a review of the decedent's medical and social history. Internal organs are examined, and samples of organs and bodily fluids are retained and tested for drugs and alcohol. In deaths resulting from violence, other types of evidence may be collected and examined by a crime laboratory or other agency.

In some cases, it may be necessary to retain whole organs for specialized examination. After such exams, which may take weeks, the organ(s) are destroyed like surgical specimens in a hospital.

Can a family refuse an autopsy?

Minnesota law [statute 390] allows family (the representative with the right to control the disposition defined in statute 149A.80) to object to autopsy based on your loved one's religious beliefs. In certain instances, autopsies must be completed in the interest of public health or to answer medical or legal questions. We are open to discussion to try and accommodate family objections to autopsy while fulfilling our legal obligation.

What happens to property?

Personal items transported with the deceased to the morgue are carefully inventoried and placed into safekeeping. This property is normally released to the funeral home making the removal from the morgue. In some cases arrangements can be made to release property directly to next-of-kin. Persons picking up property MUST have a photo ID and written authorization.

In cases of homicide, personal property and clothing are released to the investigating law enforcement agency.

What about body or tissue donation?

Depending on the circumstances of the death you may be contacted by a donor agency to discuss donation options and whether or not the deceased meets the criteria to participate in tissue donation. If you are interested in whole body donation through the University of Minnesota for medical research their contact number is 612-625-1111.

How do I obtain the death certificate?

The funeral director you have chosen to handle the final arrangements for your loved one can assist you in getting a copy of the death certificate. *The Medical Examiner's office cannot issue copies of death certificates.*

How do I get a copy of the autopsy report?

Immediate family can request a copy of the autopsy by going to the FORMS section of our website: midwestmedicalexaminer.com. Form must be complete and any payment due must be submitted prior to the request being processed.

Who has access to autopsy information and data the Medical Examiner collects?

Basic demographic information and cause and manner of death are matters of public record under Minnesota law. The rest of the information is confidential and treated similarly to a medical record. This information is available only to immediate next-of-kin, legal representatives of the decedent's estate, and treating physicians. In cases of homicide, information may be released only to law enforcement agencies and the County Attorney until the matter has made its way through the courts.