

Frequently asked questions...

Where will my loved one be taken?

Your loved one will be taken to the medical examiner's district morgue.

Is it necessary for me to come to the M.E.'s office to identify the body?

No. In most cases this is not needed. Should it become necessary, a Forensic Death Investigator will contact you.

Is viewing permitted at the M.E.'s office?

No. The facility is not designed for viewing. You must arrange viewings through the funeral home handling the service and burial.

Why is the medical examiner's office involved in this death?

Statute 49.25, of the Texas Code of Criminal Procedure, requires that a medical examiner investigation (inquest) be conducted for certain deaths such as:

1. Unattended deaths
2. Deaths occurring within 24 hours of admission to a hospital
3. Deaths where the cause of death is unknown
4. Any death due to an unnatural cause

Statute 49.25 does not provide for inquests to support civil litigation or medical purposes, thus, the M.E.'s office does not perform autopsies in those circumstances.

How long will my loved one be at the medical examiner's office?

Generally, it takes up to 24 hours to complete the examination; however, it may take longer in certain situations.

Will an autopsy be performed automatically?

While the decision to perform an autopsy will be made by the medical examiner, when a death is due to trauma or the cause cannot be established otherwise, an autopsy is performed.

What is an autopsy?

An autopsy is an internal examination of the body of a person who has died, and is performed by specially trained physicians, called pathologists. The purpose of an autopsy is to identify diseases, injuries, or trauma that may have caused the death.

What does an autopsy cost?

There is no cost to the family.

Will an autopsy interfere with funeral arrangements and viewing?

No. Autopsies are performed in a manner that allows for viewing of your loved one and does not delay funeral services.

If my loved one is not identified, how long will it be before the body is released?

An unidentified body cannot be released until a positive identity is established. A visual identification is sufficient generally, but when that is not possible, scientific methods, such as fingerprint, dental, or radiograph comparison, or DNA testing, may be used. Such advanced methods may take several days to weeks to perform. You may call an on-duty investigative clerk to check

identification status.

What should I do now?

You should select a funeral home and notify the funeral director that the death is being handled by the medical examiner's office. You must also sign a Body Release Form at the funeral home, which authorizes the M.E. to release your loved one to the funeral home you have chosen.

Who should sign the Body Release Form?

Texas law provides that only next-of-kin may sign the Body Release Form, with the right to sign following the listed priority:

1. Surviving spouse
2. Adult son or daughter
3. Either parent
4. Adult sibling

Can I get a copy of the autopsy report?

Yes. Autopsy reports are public records under Texas law, and families are provided a free copy by sending a written request and self-addressed stamped envelope to:

Denton County Medical Examiner
535 S. Loop 288
Denton, TX 76205

How long will it take to complete the examination report?

Generally, case reports are completed within 90 days.

When will the death certificate be issued?

The M.E. office will issue a death certificate within ten (10) days of the examination. The funeral home chosen by the family is responsible by law to file the death certificate with the Texas Bureau of Vital Statistics. In cases where the cause and manner of death cannot be established within the initial filing period, an amendment will be filed automatically by the M.E. office once the ruling is finalized.

How can I obtain my loved one's personal effects?

With family approval, clothing and property are released to the funeral home picking up the decedent. In certain circumstances, family may be required to pick the effects in person, and in rare cases, such as a homicide, clothing and effects may be retained as evidence.

Denton County Medical Examiners Office
535 S. Loop 288
Denton, TX 76205

940-349-1600 answered 24 hours
940-349-2870 8-4:30 Monday thru Friday

