

# Crime scenes, death, evidence and EMS



# WHAT IS A CRIME SCENE

A crime scene for this exercise will pertain to a human death.

A crime scene is any place or location where a dead body is found.

This location is referred to as the “primary crime scene” unless evidence shows the deceased was killed elsewhere and then dumped at this location. At which time the location of the body is the secondary crime scene and the location of the incident is the primary crime scene



# WHERE ARE CRIME SCENES LOCATED

A crime scene can be anywhere, from a home, garages, farm buildings, business buildings, vehicles, outdoors, churches, pools, rivers, sewers, and wells just to name a few.



# WHAT IS PHYSICAL EVIDENCE

Physical evidence is any tangible article, small or large, which tends to prove or disprove a point in question.

Physical evidence may be used to:

- A. Reconstruct the crime
- B. Identify the participant(s)
- C. Confirm or discredit an alibi



# TYPES OF EVIDENCE



Evidence ordinarily falls within three(3) distinct categories

1. **Body materials;** blood (wet or dry) semen, urine, saliva, feces, vomit, tissues, hair, finger prints
2. **Objects;** bullets, casings or cartridges, shotgun shells, shotgun wadding, live ammunition, firearms, knives, garden sheers, soil, tire irons, tools, fabrics, clothing, cigarettes/cigar butts, narcotics, vehicles, displaced furniture, beer/soda cans, arson material for some objects.
3. **Impressions;** letters, notes, papers



# MEDICAL EXAMINER



A Medical Examiner is an appointed official with the necessary qualifications.

A Medical Examiner must be a physician licensed to practice medicine in that state and be certified by the American Board of Pathology in anatomic and forensic pathology.

In Illinois there is only one(1) county which appoints a Medical Examiner and that is the county of *Cook*.

In Cook County, the President of the Cook County Board of Commissioners with the advice and consent of the Board of Commissioners appoints the Medical Examiner

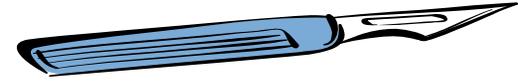
# COUNTY CORONER

A County Coroner is an *elected* official with no required qualifications.

In the State of Illinois there are 100 counties that operate under the Coroners Jurisdiction



# AUTOPSY



By definition autopsy is the postmortem examination of the organs and tissues of a body to determine **CAUSE** of death.

- **Cause** of death is the injury or disease that begins the process that leads to death
- **Mechanism** of death is the biochemical or physiologic abnormality resulting in death...sudden death, shock bleeding, etc.
- **Manner** of death is the circumstances surrounding the death
- A “**Forensic**” **autopsy**, performed by a Board Certified Forensic Pathologist deals with the legal, law side of a criminal death
- A “**Pathology**” **autopsy** deals more with the pathological death cases, which deal with hospital deaths from medical causes such as cancer



# AUTOPSY REQUIREMENTS

- The State of Illinois, Illinois Department of Public Health has control over the Coroner and/or Medical Examiner in performing autopsies.
- All deaths in the State of Illinois are reported to the IDPH by the Coroner & Medical Examiner, where the cases are reviewed.
- The Coroner does not have the exclusive right to order an autopsy. The next of kin of the deceased may request an autopsy; however, the Coroner does have the right, under reasonable grounds to order an autopsy if there is a belief or evidence of criminal means.

- An autopsy is performed at the County Coroners/ Medical Examiners Office
- All Medical Examiners have a morgue facility on site of their location
- Not all Coroner Offices have their own morgue. They have to contract with another Coroner's Office or the local hospital to use their morgue facility to perform the autopsy
- Funeral Homes were used, in the past, for autopsies.
- The Coroner and Medical Examiner try to honor all religious beliefs while maintaining ethical and legal responsibilities



# AUTOPSY PROCEDURE

- There are many things which can occur during an autopsy, depending on the death investigation findings. Listed below are a few procedures followed, documented and photographed at all autopsies
- Gross External Findings: documentation of any clothing, including size, color, name brands, jewelry including piercings and their locations, scars, identifying marks, tattoos, bruises, abrasions, etc. dental examination, height, weight, apparent age, deformities, abnormalities, color of hair and eyes, etc.
- Internal Findings: Measure of body fat, examination of all internal organs for color, size, shape, deformities, abnormalities, diseases
- Specimens removed are replaced into the bodies chest cavity inside a large plastic bag and sent with the body to the next destination, usually a funeral home; however, it may go to a school or lab for the use of science study if the deceased family requested
- Blood is taken along with vitreous humor (eye), urine, bile, and sometimes small sample tissues from the various body organs for toxicology testing. The tests check for drugs, alcohol and poisoning. The test tubes are then properly sealed and sent to a Certified laboratory for identification and quantitative analysis



# EXHUMATION OF A BODY

- Exhumation of a human body must be obtained by a court order, giving permission to exhume the body for further examination that has been buried in a cemetery
- Legal procedure involves informing the States Attorney of a valid reason for the exhumation
- Have a petition presented for exhumation to a Circuit Judge by the States Attorney
- Have next of kin consent in writing to allow exhumation
- Have the funeral director prepare the Application for Disinterment/ Re-interment Permit.



## The Exhumation Procedure:

- Photos are taken of the marker or head stone
- Photos taken of the grave vault or box before opening
- Photo taken of the casket before removing from vault or mausoleum
- Photos of the casketed remains before removal from casket
- Positive ID of decedent
- Then the autopsy....

It should be noted that the Coroner/Medical Examiner has sufficient authority under State Law to order an exhumation on his own initiative without recourse to the court; however, consultation with the States Attorney is indicated

## Only 5 Manners of Death are listed on the Official Death Certificate

- Homicide
- Suicide
- Accident
- Natural
- Undetermined

# MEDICAL EXAMINERS & CORONERS MISSIONS

**Both Medical Examiners and Coroners** ensure public health and safety by performing autopsies and postmortem examinations to determine cause and manner of death for individuals who die in their respective counties.

**Both offices investigate any human death that falls within any or all of the following categories:**

criminal violence, homicides, suicides, accidents, criminal abortion, suspicious or unusual circumstances, when there is no attending physician, disease constituting threat to public health, drowning, drug overdose, death occurred while in hospital during surgery, medical or diagnostic procedure, or child birth, incarceration in jail/prison or in police custody, death occurs on the job, fire deaths, when any body is to be cremated, dissected or buried at sea



# LONG TERM INDICATIONS OF DEATH



If any of these signs are present, there is NO need for monitor leads to be placed on the body

- **Decomposition**
  - **Decapitation**
  - **Rigor Mortis**
  - **Lividity aka Livor Mortis**
  - **Mummification**
  - **Putrefaction**
  - **Incineration -**
  - **Bloating**
  - **Skin slippage**
  - **Maggots**
  - **Tache noire**
- A deceased body is usually cold to touch, but there may be environmental or family interference that may alter this.

# Descriptions of the Indicators

- **Post Mortem Lividity** is the discoloration of the body, blue/pink-blue/purple, it begins less than 1 hour in the lowest body part/area. Lividity takes 8 hours to set and will not change location after that.
- **Rigor Mortis** is the stiffening of the bodies muscles, begins within 1-2 hours in involuntary muscles, develops completely in 12 hours and continues for 12 hours, then dissipates in 12 hours, a 36 hour total process. Will leave the same way it enters from head down.
- **Maggots** - flies are attracted to the smell of death and lay their eggs in any body cavity opening, the eggs hatch in 18-36 hours.

# Descriptions (cont'd)

**Decomposition** generally begins in the abdomen 12-24 hours after death is a greenish discoloration, gasses collect in the intestines & distend the abdomen in 12-18 hours

**Marbling** occurs after 24 hours

**Putrefactive odor** 24 hours from the gasses collecting in the intestines & distend abdomen

**Mummification**-dehydration of the body tissues. Though rare in Illinois, if the conditions are right it can occur in days to weeks. Seen more in dry/arid conditions.



**Incineration** a body burned to be charred

**Skin slippage** when the skin begins to fall off the body, occurs in approximately 4-7 days

**Tache noire** is seen in the sclera of the eye. A dark line forms across the sclera due to the drying of the eye tissue when the upper eye lids do not close completely at time of death. May occur in approximately 3 hours.



# What does EMS Do In These Cases ?

Should the Police arrive first on the scene of a body showing obvious signs of death, there is no reason for them to page out Fire/EMS unless that is their departments protocol. They should notify their investigators or detectives, who in turn would contact the Coroner or Medical Examiners Office regarding the matter.



Should EMS /Fire arrive on the scene first, you should contact your local hospital and call in a triple zero explaining the incident. Have dispatch notify the Police and Coroner/Medical Examiners Office (if appropriate) of the situation.



In all cases you should NOT disturb any evidence of the body.  
Always inform law enforcement if any changes to the scene were made.

# STAGES OF GRIEF



There may be a time when you encounter a family member deeply upset that their loved one has died. They may react in one of the following ways:

- A. Denial – “No it’s not true, you’re lying.” Denial is a valuable defense mechanism.
- B. Anger -“Why me?” Angry with the person for dying.
- C. Bargaining- “God if you bring them back I promise to go to church everyday.” The person bargains their life to bring back their deceased member.
- D. Depression – the preparing to say good bye.. It is appropriate and should be respected
- E. Acceptance – This is the final phase. May still display at times one or more of the above but this begins the healing process.

Not all individuals grieve the same way so be alert, some may act out with violence toward you for telling them their loved one is gone.

# Things to Remember

- Be sure to follow standard precautions and wear the appropriate PPE
- Sometime items need to be moved by you, inform the Police, Coroner's/Medical Examiner's Deputy what you touched, moved, broke. Tell them where you walked, etc.
- Do not leave the scene of a dead body until the Police or a Deputy from the Coroner's/Medical Examiner's Offices arrives on the scene to take over custody of the body
- Secure the scene the best way possible, keep family, on-lookers away, set up a screen between the body and the on-lookers using sheets from **your** ambulance not sheets from the scene, or use a tarp and pike poles from your fire engine, use caution or crime scene tape that you might carry on your vehicle
- If this is a domestic situation be sure you and your partner watch each others back. The offender may still be at/near the scene.
- Document what you see and what treatments your performed.
- If you don't need to go into a crime scene, don't!

# Crime Scene/Evidence Program

We would like to thank Phyliss Dralle, retired Grundy County Deputy Coroner and former paramedic/firefighter in the South Cook County EMS System for her valued assistance with this power point presentation.