



P I N A L • C O U N T Y  
*wide open opportunity*

## INFORMATION FOR NEXT-OF-KIN – MEDICAL EXAMINER PROCEDURES

To Family or Friends:

First let me express my sincere condolences for your loss. This information sheet is intended to answer many of the procedural questions you may have in the coming days. While we make a sincere effort to accommodate the requests of the decedent or the family, in certain circumstances, we may be unable to do so given the provisions of Arizona law or the law enforcement or public health implications involved in a case. Under Arizona law, the Medical Examiner is both required and empowered to determine the cause and manner of certain deaths.

### PROCESS

#### Transportation

If necessary, we will arrange for transportation of the decedent's body to:

- Pinal County Office of the Medical Examiner: 570 W. Adamsville Road, Florence, Arizona 85132, telephone: 520-866-7260.
- Pima County Office of the Medical Examiner-Forensic Science Center: 2825 E. District Street, Tucson, Arizona 85714, telephone: 520-243-8600
- Either the Pinal County Office of the Medical Examiner or Pima County Office of the Medical Examiner-Forensic Science Center. We will immediately notify you upon determining the office in which the examination will occur.

#### Examination

An examination by a forensic pathologist will be conducted to determine the actual cause and manner of death and a death certificate will be completed. This examination normally occurs within three days of our receipt of the decedent's body. The forensic pathologist will determine whether an autopsy and/or laboratory tests are required as part of the examination. Autopsies are generally required in approximately 65% of the cases.

#### Request for Identification Meeting

In those situations where an immediate family member questions the decedent's identification or otherwise wishes to assist in making identification, the immediate family member may make a written or electronic request for an identification meeting to the medical examiner and should call (520) 866-7260 to initiate making said request.

#### Release of Remains

The decedent's body will be available for release soon after completion of the examination and upon the receipt of a signed Authority to Release Remains form from the representative of the mortuary or other service (e.g., cremation society, transportation service) designated in the authorization. The Release must be executed by the legal next-of-kin authorized by law to direct disposition of the remains. This person sometimes differs from persons or legal entities authorized to handle other aspects of the decedent's affairs. The mortuary normally provides the signed Release to us after obtaining authorization from the legal next-of-kin. The mortuary will also request certain vital statistics/demographic information from the next-of-kin that must be recorded on the death certificate. Please note that we are unable to refer you to a specific mortuary.

Medical Examiner

570 W. Adamsville Road, P.O. Box 966, Florence, AZ 85132 Phone: 520-866-7260 Fax: 520-866-7296 www.pinalcountyaz.gov

### **Pending Cases**

In approximately 40% of our cases, we are unable to determine the cause and/or manner of death immediately following our examination. It is frequently necessary for us to perform additional investigation, which may include microscopic, chemical or toxicological tests in order to determine the cause and/or manner of death. Depending on the specific analyses required, these determinations may require approximately 90 days of further investigation. In the event such additional time is required, we will note on the initial death certificate that the cause of death is "Pending." Your mortuary will then complete the other sections of the death certificate and file it with the Department of Public Health, Office of Vital Registration. Once we have determined the cause and manner of death, we will submit an amended death certificate to the Department of Public Health, Office of Vital Records, which will be available for issuance to the family upon request. Please be aware that many insurance companies do not accept a "Pending" death certificate as sufficient for purposes of payment of life insurance or other benefits. Although it is your decision, you may want to instruct your mortuary to wait until we have filed the amended death certificate before ordering and paying for the death certificate copies you desire.

### **PERSONAL PROPERTY**

At the scene of death, we take custody of certain personal property belonging to the decedent. We may release this personal property at the scene to the legal next-of-kin. If not, the property is removed from the scene along with the decedent and we will release the property to the mortuary for its further delivery to the next-of-kin.

### **COPIES OF DOCUMENTS**

#### **Death Certificates**

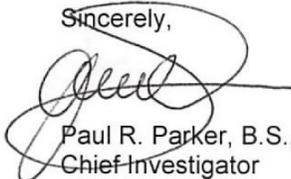
You may request certified copies of the death certificate from the County's Department of Public Health, Office of Vital Records at (520) 866-7318 or (800) 231-8499 x7318. You may request in person at 36235 N. Gantzel Road, San Tan Valley or 41600 W. Smith Enke Road, Maricopa. You may also mail requests to P.O. Box 2945, Florence, AZ, 85132.

#### **Medical Examiner Reports**

No matter which office conducts the actual examination, Pinal County or Pima County, all requests for copies of the reports must be made to the Pinal County office. Copies of the reports will be available after the cause and manner of death have been determined and the death certificate filed. We require a completed and signed Request for Release of Public Records for Non-Commercial Purpose form and payment of the applicable fees prior to releasing copies of reports. The form can be downloaded from our website: <http://www.pinalcountyz.gov/MedicalExaminer/> Next-of-kin must pay \$10.00 for the first copy of the report and \$35.00 for each additional copy. All other persons must pay \$35.00 for a copy of the report.

Please call our office at (520) 866-7260 if you have any questions.

Sincerely,



Paul R. Parker, B.S., D-ABMDI  
Chief Investigator