

# CITY OF BARSTOW

CALIFORNIA

POLICIES and PROCEDURES MANUAL:

POLICE

Subject:

*SUSPICIOUS DEATH*

## INTRODUCTION

This procedure defines suspicious death and deaths requiring coroner notification and establishes the responsibilities of the responding officer, the investigator, and the watch commander in suspicious death occurrences.

## DEFINITION

A suspicious death is one where the deceased expired unattended or as a result of violence or unusual circumstances.

## DEATHS REQUIRING CORONER NOTIFICATION

The State of California Government Code Section 27492, directs the Coroner to inquire into and determine the circumstances, manner, and cause of the following deaths, which shall be immediately reported to the San Bernardino County Coroner's Office:

1. No physician in attendance.
2. The deceased has not been attended by a physician in the ten (10) days prior to death.
3. Physician unable to state cause of death.
4. Known or suspected homicide.
5. Known or suspected suicide.
6. Death involving any criminal action or suspicion of a criminal act.
7. Related to or following known or suspected self-induced or criminal abortion.
8. Associated with a known or alleged rape or other crime against nature.
9. Following an accident or injury (primary or contributory) occurring immediately or at some remote time.
10. Drowning, fire, hanging, gunshot, stabbing, cutting, starvation, exposure, alcoholism, drug addiction, strangulation, or aspiration.

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11. *Accidental poisoning (food, chemical, drug, therapeutic agents).*
12. *Occupational diseases or occupational hazards.*
13. *Known or suspected contagious disease and constitution of a public health hazard.*
14. *All deaths in hospital operating rooms.*
15. *All deaths where a patient has not fully recovered from an anesthetic, whether in surgery, recovery room, or elsewhere.*
16. *All deaths in which the patient was comatose throughout the period of physician's attendance, whether in home or hospital.*
17. *In prison or while under sentence.*
18. *All solitary deaths (unattended by a physician or other person in period preceding death).*
19. *All deaths of unidentified persons.*

*A copy of all Death Reports will be immediately forwarded to the County Coroner.*

## RESPONDING OFFICER

*The first officer on the scene at a suspicious death is the officer in charge until the arrival of an investigator. THE FIRST OFFICER SHALL PROTECT THE CRIME SCENE AND THE AREA OF OCCURRENCE UNTIL THE ARRIVAL OF AN INVESTIGATOR. In the event there is some question as to whether the person is dead or alive, the subject will be transported to the hospital or other medial arrangements made. No notifications to the press or other agencies will be made except by the investigator. The coroner's officer will be notified after a reasonable effort has been made to cause a police investigator to respond. Under no circumstances shall the officer in charge or the watch commander delay more than fifteen (15) minutes in contacting the coroner in the case of an unattended death (refer to Section 10250 H&S Code).*

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## NO UNAUTHORIZED OR UNNECESSARY PERSONNEL SHALL ENTER CRIME SCENE

The first officer on the scene shall notify his watch commander who shall assign an on-duty investigator, or if an on-duty investigator is not available, he shall assign the on-call investigator to respond to the scene. It shall be at the discretion of the watch commander whether or not an investigator shall be required to respond on unattended deaths.

### WATCH COMMANDER

It shall be the watch commander's responsibility to see that the first officer on the scene protects the crime scene, takes the preliminary report, and assists the investigator in any way that the can.

### OTHER DEATHS

In deaths caused by industrial accidents or as a result of a traffic accident, the coroner shall be notified immediately by the responding officer. In the event death is caused by industrial accident, the watch commander shall notify the nearest CAL-OSHA Office as required by law.

### SUICIDES

All suicides shall be handled as suspicious deaths.

### AUTOPSIES

When autopsies are performed as a result of an unattended death, the Investigative Division Commander may elect to assign no more than two officers to attend the autopsy.

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