4-03/005.15 - Procedures for Handling Dead Bodies

On non-coroner cases, the policy of the Department is as follows:

- If the remains are in public view, have the body removed to the morgue and advise and assist the family in arranging for removal of the body from the island; or
- If remains are not in public view, advise and assist the family in arranging for removal of the body from the island.

When a coroner's case is involved, contact the Homicide Bureau, as soon as possible and advise them of the circumstances (Homicide Bureau to report the case to the coroner's main office). Following instructions from the Homicide Bureau, the remains are to be removed, as quickly as possible, from the location of death to the morgue in Avalon by the most proper carrier available. A coroner's representative will designate an alternate location if it is to be other than the Avalon Morgue.

All property on the body in a coroner's case--with the exception of Homicide cases--shall be taken for safe keeping by the deputy handling the original call. The deputy shall prepare an original and 3 copies of the personal effects inventory form 76C622. If a witness is at the scene and actually participates or assists the deputy in handling the remains, he shall, whenever possible, be requested to sign the appropriate portion of form 76C622 and be given the second copy (pink) of the form. The property and form 76C622 shall be retained by the deputy for safekeeping until turned over to, and a receipt obtained from the person transporting the personal property and remains to the mainland.

The person transporting the remains and the property to the mainland shall complete the 'received from' portion of form 76C622 and shall distribute the form as follows:

- Original (white) - to accompany the remains to the mainland and be delivered to the coroner's fffice with the body and property;
- First copy (blue) - same as the original unless the transporting person is a deputy, in which case he shall obtain the signature of the coroner's representative acknowledging receipt of the remains and the property on form 76C622. The deputy shall retain the first copy (blue) as his receipt;
- Second copy (pink) - to be given with the original to the coroner unless previously given to a witness; and
- Third copy (yellow) - to be returned to the deputy handling the original call as his receipt for the remains and the personal property.

Other property of the deceased such as a vehicle, boat, etc. shall be properly preserved by the Sheriff's Department until the heirs take possession.

All evidence shall be held for safekeeping by the Department until an appropriate disposition can be made.

Homicide Bureau will advise the coroner's fffice as to whether the family has been notified. In the event that notification has not been made, the coroner's office may want to assume the responsibility for making such notification; however, Homicide Bureau retains the responsibility for seeing that the next-of-kin is notified as soon as possible. For death notifications refer to section 4-19/010.00.

In general, disposition of medical-legal cases by the coroner's office will involve the following procedures:

- All dead bodies on or in the vicinity of Catalina Island requiring an autopsy will be transported to the mainland in the most proper carrier available. In instances where it is more advantageous to the Sheriff's Department to transport the remains directly to the mainland, the procedures shall be coordinated by the Homicide Bureau. The body will be processed in the coroner's main morgue. Family requests will not be recognized by the coroner's office on such cases;
- All dead bodies on Catalina Island not requiring an autopsy will be processed on the Island and released to the persons legally entitled to control disposition of the remains. A deputy medical examiner will determine if an autopsy is necessary; and
- When possible, the incident report should accompany the remains to the mainland.

The coroner's office will furnish Sheriff's personnel on Catalina Island with body bags, plastic bags for property, rubber gloves, rubber sheeting, property books, and toe tags.