

5-09/090.15 - Movement of Deceased Persons - Coroner's Cases

There will be limited instances involving coroner's cases where it is also advisable to move the deceased pending the coroner's arrival.

In these cases where the victim is known or believed to be dead due to apparent natural causes or by accident and the victim is unattended by a physician or has not been seen by a doctor within 20 days prior to his death, the deputy shall contact Homicide Bureau for permission to move the deceased to a more-suitable, nearby location pending arrival of the coroner.

Upon calling Homicide Bureau, the Deputy requesting permission to move the deceased should be prepared to provide information as to why the deceased should be moved and the intended place of relocation. The Homicide Bureau must then obtain permission from the coroner's office.

At the scene of an officer-involved shooting or homicide, prior to removing the body from the crime scene, attempts should be made to calm and persuade the crowd to disperse. Movement of the deceased should only be considered if it is not appropriate to cover the body or to move the family members or spectators away from the deceased. These intense situations escalate rapidly and delays in removing the body could become perilous.

Contact the inciting party(s), family member(s), or friend(s) of the deceased at the scene. Explain to the parties involved the reasons for having the body remain at the scene. (The chances are greater for solving the crime if the evidence remains intact for the homicide detectives and the coroner, etc.).

If circumstances dictate, protect the body and/or crime scene from public view. This may be accomplished by the positioning of radio cars or Department crime scene barriers. Every effort should be made to protect the integrity of the crime scene.

Field personnel at the scene need to be cognizant of their actions and possible consequences.

When the situation occurs wherein the crowd is becoming unruly and there is the potential for officer safety to be at risk and/or innocent bystanders being hurt, the watch commander shall immediately respond to the location, evaluate and decide whether or not the decedent needs to be transported in order to diminish the potential danger.

If the decision is made to move the decedent, the following steps shall be taken:

- The watch commander shall contact Homicide Bureau who will contact the coroner and request permission to move the body. If circumstances make it impossible to contact Homicide Bureau for permission to move a deceased person and it is imperative that the deceased be moved, the deputy may move the body, notifying Homicide Bureau as soon as possible thereafter. It should be noted that the request for movement of a deceased person is a common sense judgment wherein sympathetic perception and concern for the deceased's family, fellow workers, the general public, or officer's safety must be taken into consideration; In extremely emergent situations, the watch commander may cause the body to be moved prior to receiving the coroner's approval. The watch commander must be prepared to fully justify his decision to the coroner's office;

- Follow instructions from Homicide Bureau regarding outlining the body and evidence with yellow crayon/chalk;
- Prior to moving the body and/or evidence, record digital video of the crowd and draw a sketch of the entire crime scene and the crowd. Still photos shall also be taken whenever possible. Consider using aerial photography;
- Have the body transported to the command post, hospital, or other safe location via ambulance or paramedics. A deputy must accompany the body until relieved by Homicide Bureau or the coroner. In extreme conditions and only as a last resort, transportation may be facilitated by radio car; and
- Notify Homicide Bureau as to where the body was transported.

Make a second evaluation of the crowd after the decedent has been transported from the scene:

- If the crowd becomes calm, then leave the evidence undisturbed and continue to protect the crime scene until Homicide Bureau arrives; or
 - If the crowd does not become calm and it becomes apparent the evidence is in jeopardy, assign an assisting unit to gather and transport the evidence to the station.
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