

Death Investigation

328.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

The purpose of this policy is to provide guidelines for situations where officers initially respond to and investigate the circumstances of a deceased person.

Some causes of death may not be readily apparent and some cases differ substantially from what they appear to be initially. The thoroughness of death investigations and use of appropriate resources and evidence gathering techniques is critical.

328.2 POLICY

It is the policy of the University of Maryland, Baltimore Police Department to respond, document and investigate incidents where a person is deceased. Investigations involving the death of a person, including those from natural causes, accidents, workplace incidents, suicide and homicide, shall be initiated, investigated and properly documented.

328.3 INVESTIGATION CONSIDERATIONS

Emergency medical services shall be called in all suspected death cases unless death is obvious (e.g., decapitated, decomposed).

The Shift Supervisor shall be notified as soon as possible to assist and provide appropriate personnel and resources. The Shift Supervisor shall notify the Shift Commander accordingly. The Shift Commander will make notification to the Operations Bureau Commander and Investigations Division Supervisor in accordance with the Major Incident Notification Policy. The Operations Bureau Commander will notify the Chief of Police through the chain of command.

328.3.1 REPORTING

All incidents involving a death shall be documented on an Incident Report.

328.3.2 BPD HOMICIDE UNIT REQUEST

Officers are not authorized to pronounce death unless they are also BPD Homicide Units, Deputy BPD Homicide Units, or appointed BPD Homicide Unit investigators. The BPD Homicide Unit shall be called in all sudden or unexpected deaths or deaths due to other than natural causes. State law requires that the BPD Homicide Unit and the Baltimore City State's Attorney be notified and given the known facts concerning the time, place, manner, and circumstances of the death in any of the following cases (Md. Code HG § 5-308):

- (a) If the death occurred:
 - 1. By violence.
 - 2. By suicide.
 - 3. By casualty.
 - 4. Suddenly, if the deceased was in apparent good health or unattended by a physician.

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5. In any suspicious or unusual manner.
- (b) If the death of a human fetus:
 1. Occurred before the complete expulsion or extraction of the fetus from the mother when the mother was not attended by a physician at or after the delivery, regardless of the duration of the pregnancy.

328.3.3 SEARCHING DECEASED BODIES

- (a) The BPD Homicide Unit, their assistant and authorized investigators are generally the only persons permitted to move, handle or search a dead body.
- (b) An officer may make a reasonable search of an individual who it is reasonable to believe is dead, or near death, for the purpose of identification or for information identifying the individual as an anatomical donor. If a donor document is located, the BPD Homicide Unit or their assistant shall be promptly notified.
- (c) The BPD Homicide Unit, will take property, objects or articles found on the deceased or in the immediate vicinity of the deceased that may be necessary for conducting an investigation to determine the identity of the deceased or the cause or manner of death.
- (d) Should exigent circumstances indicate to an officer that any other search of a known dead body is warranted prior to the arrival of the BPD Homicide Unit or their assistant, the investigating officer shall first obtain verbal consent from the BPD Homicide Unit or their assistant when practicable.
- (e) Whenever reasonably possible, a witness, preferably a relative to the deceased or a member of the household, should be requested to remain nearby the scene and available to the officer pending the arrival of the BPD Homicide Unit or their assistant. The name and address of this person shall be included in the narrative of the Incident Report.
- (f) Whenever personal effects are removed from the body of the deceased by the BPD Homicide Unit or their assistant, a receipt shall be obtained. This receipt shall be attached to the Incident Report.

328.3.4 SUSPECTED HOMICIDE

If the initially assigned officer suspects that the death involves a homicide or other suspicious circumstances, the officer shall take steps to protect the scene. The Investigations Division shall be notified to determine the possible need for an investigator to respond to the scene.

If the Shift Supervisor, through consultation with the Shift Commander or Investigations Division Supervisor is unable to determine the manner of death, the investigation shall proceed as though it is a homicide.

328.3.5 EMPLOYMENT-RELATED DEATHS OR INJURIES

Any member of this department who responds to and determines that a death, serious illness or serious injury has occurred as a result of an accident at or in connection with the victim's

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employment should ensure that the regional Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) office is notified of all pertinent information.

328.4 UNIDENTIFIED DEAD BODY

If the identity of a dead body cannot be established, the handling officer will request from the BPD Homicide Unit a unique identifying number for the body. The number shall be included in the Incident Report.

328.5 DEATH NOTIFICATION

When reasonably practicable, and if not handled by the BPD Homicide Unit's Office, notification to the next-of-kin of the deceased person shall be made, in person, by the officer assigned to the incident. If the next-of-kin lives in another jurisdiction, a law enforcement official from that jurisdiction shall be requested to make the personal notification.

If a deceased person has been identified as a missing person, this department shall attempt to locate family members and inform them of the death and location of the deceased missing person's remains. All efforts to locate and notify family members shall be recorded in appropriate reports.