

# Death Certificates and Medical Examiner Cases

Jan Manilla

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# Medical Examiner Regulations

- Mandatory reporting to the Medical Examiner of certain deaths
- Clinician/Physician responsibilities completing death certificates
- Medical Examiner policy regulating the performance of autopsy
- Retention of certain moribund patients' laboratory samples for anticipated Medical Examiner testing
- Suggested retention of hospital laboratory samples in suspected assault resulting in serious bodily injury

# Circumstances of Death Which Mandate Notification to the Medical Examiner

West Virginia Code §61-12-8 requires that the following deaths must be immediately reported to your County Medical Examiner or County Coroner, for investigation. If that person is not available, or cannot be contacted for any reason, then the State Medical Examiner must be contacted. The State Medical Examiner can provide contact phone numbers for your County Medical Examiner/Coroner by calling (304) 558-6921.

- Death resulting directly or indirectly from antecedent conditions or injuries received as the result of an accident, homicide, or suicidal gesture; or if a reasonable suspicion of death due to accident, homicide or suicide exists. This criterion applies irrespective of the duration of survival of the individual.
- Any death associated with evidence of physical abuse or suspected physical abuse; or if significant neglect of a child, or of any incapacitated or incompetent person.
- A sudden unexpected death where the circumstances, such as age <65, do not allow the attending physician to reasonably infer that death is due to natural disease processes.

- Any death where there is reasonable suspicion that there exists an underlying contagious disease or other condition that may constitute a threat to the public health or safety.
- Any death where thought to be due to, or arising out of complications of drug abuse/intoxication.
- Any death during or associated with a therapeutic procedure, where the death may have resulted from a complication of the procedure, treatment or therapy, or where the death is not readily explained as a consequence of pre-existing natural disease.
- Any death occurring as the result of, associated with, during, or following police intervention, transport or custody; or death during court ordered custody or incarceration, even if reasonably due to natural disease processes.
- Any death occurring in medical, mental health, or convalescent care facility, where the cause of death cannot be inferred as being due solely to natural disease process, or where there is suspicion of grossly inadequate or improper care, or willful abuse of the decedent.

Any death wherein there is any question whether the circumstances listed above, or suspected to have occurred as the result of such circumstances, where the pronouncement occurs in a hospital setting, must be reported to the County Medical Examiner, County Coroner or the State Medical Examiner, Forensic Investigative Unit at (304) 558-6920 or (877) 563-0426, regardless of the interval between the underlying/inciting cause of death.

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## News

### New simulator helps Trauma Services expand outreach efforts

Through a grant and other funding, Trauma Services acquired One Simple Decision, a computer simulator that mimics the experiences of driving under the influence of alcohol and driving while distracted.

### New photo gallery: Take a tour inside the new southeast tower

Scott Bierer, director, Facilities Engineering, and Alan Neptune, a manager in Planning, Design and Construction, led staff from Ruby Memorial Hospital on a tour of the new southeast tower today (May 25).

### WVU Medicine announces new bone and joint hospital

To meet the growing demand in West Virginia and surrounding states for complex orthopaedic care, WVU Medicine announced today (May 25) that it is designating a floor at its flagship, Ruby Memorial Hospital, as a 22-bed orthopaedic hospital. This hospital within a hospital will complement WVU Medicine's existing outpatient orthopaedic clinics.

### Active Shooter training offered to employees

The WVU Medicine Security and Safety departments, in cooperation with the U.S. Marshals Service, are offering voluntary, 90-minute courses in Active Shooter training.

### Single-stream recycling service available

A variety of materials, including plastic, paper, and glass, can now be recycled at nurses' stations and break rooms on each floor of Ruby Memorial Hospital.



**CONSTRUCTION**

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## Upcoming Events

Wednesday

Jun  
**01**

WVU Plastics Botox  
Clinic

Wednesday

Jun  
**01**

Farmers Market



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🏠 Our Patients

## Our Patients

### [Directions & Maps](#)

Directions, maps and lodging information is provided to assist WVU Medicine patients.

### [Ebola Preparedness](#)

Learn about WVU Medicine's Ebola preparedness efforts, including its Infection Protection and Containment Unit. There are also links to important resources from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

### [Medical Record Access](#)

Learn how patients can request medical records, or to sign up for a MyWVUChart account or gain proxy access.

### [No One Dies Alone](#)

WVU Medicine's No One Dies Alone program provides volunteers to sit and spend time with patients as they make it through the final journey of their lives.

### [Post-mortem Care](#)

Faculty, staff and family members have many questions following the death of a patient. This Post-mortem Care Guide will provide answers to many of your questions, including how to complete required paperwork.

[Ronald McDonald House](#)

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### Post-mortem Care

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## Post-mortem Care

Faculty, staff and family members have many questions following the death of a patient. We will provide answers to many of your questions, including how to complete the post-mortem care handbook.

### Handbook Links and Forms

- [Death Certificates](#)
- [Autopsy Consents](#)
- [Human Gift Registry](#)
- [Releasing Decedent Directly to Family](#)
- [Infant Deaths](#)
- [Report of Death Form](#)

[Download Entire Handbook \(.pdf\)](#)

### Contact Information



WEST VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & HUMAN RESOURCES  
BUREAU FOR PUBLIC HEALTH - VITAL REGISTRATION  
PHYSICIANS / MEDICAL EXAMINER'S CERTIFICATE OF DEATH  
ROOM 165 350 CAPITOL STREET CHARLESTON, WV 25301

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# Cause of Death

- Never use cardiac arrest or cardiopulmonary arrest or other generic phrase as the cause of death.
- You must list an underlying cause.
- Death certificates will be returned to you for correction if you do not list the underlying cause.

# Contact information:

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Extension 74167 in Ruby

Thank you.