



OFFICE OF THE POLK COUNTY MEDICAL EXAMINER
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Response Partners,

In response to the COVID-19 Pandemic, the Polk County Medical Examiner's Office will be revising our protocol regarding circumstances under which Medicolegal Death Investigators (MDI) will respond to death scenes.

In designing this protocol, the following objectives were considered:

1. Continue to conduct thorough investigations.
2. Minimize the chance of exposure to COVID-19 to our MDI's.
3. Minimize the change of exposure to response partners and families of decedents.
4. Minimize time that response partners are on scene.

Please note that that an MDI will still respond to scenes on all of the following:

- Homicides / Suicides
- Motor Vehicle Crashes
- Cases where the decedent's body is outside
- Cases where next-of-kin is not known or not on scene
- If responders on scene have any concerns that death isn't natural

When requesting the Medical Examiner, we ask that the following information be provided to Polk County Sheriff's Office Communications:

1. Name/Phone of personnel at scene. (This may be EMS or Law Enforcement).
2. Decedent Name and Date of Birth.
3. Suspected manner of death (natural, homicide, suicide, accident, unknown).
4. Decedent COVID-19 exposure (confirmed or suspected if known).

This information will allow the MDI to briefly review medical records and determine if a scene response is necessary.

If the death is reported to be a natural death:

1. MDI will conduct a brief review of medical records.
2. MDI will contact personnel on scene by telephone.
 - A. In collaboration with personnel on scene, MDI will determine if death appears to be natural.
3. If death does NOT appear natural, MDI will respond to scene.
4. If death appears natural and the decedent is over the age of 50 or has significant medical history, MDI will obtain next-of-kin contact information from personnel on scene.
5. Law Enforcement and EMS will be advised that they can release from the scene.
6. MDI will contact next-of-kin by telephone to gather information and coordinate removal with funeral home of family choice.

Please feel free to contact our office at any time if you have questions.

Thank you,

Joshua W. Akers, MD
Chief Medical Examiner