



**Oakland County Medical Control Authority**  
**SYSTEM**  
**MEDICAL EXAMINER NOTIFICATION AND**  
**BODY DISPOSITION**

Initial Date: 9/14/2023

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Section 8-22

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***Medical Examiner Notification and Body Disposition***

The intent of this policy is to establish standards for proper and respectful disposition, handling, and notifications for a deceased person.

- Refer to **7.6 Dead on Scene & Termination of Resuscitation-Procedure Protocol** for determination of when and when not to initiate CPR, and when to terminate efforts.

**I. Out of hospital death – Notification of the Medical Examiner**

- A. Law enforcement shall be notified for any out-of-hospital death.
- B. Responsibility to notify the Medical Examiner:
  1. If a patient is transported to a hospital from the scene, the hospital is responsible for the notification.
  2. If a patient is pronounced dead without being transported to the hospital, the notification is the responsibility of local law enforcement.
- C. Provide gift of life status to the entity contacting the Medical Examiner's office.

**II. Out of Hospital Death – Management, Handling and Movement of Body**

- A. A body shall not be moved from the location of death without approval of the Medical Examiner's office.
- B. Bodies must remain in the physical custody of the police or EMS until released by the Medical Examiner's office.
- C. Medical devices utilized during care by EMS must remain in place.
- D. If there is evidence of suspicious, violent or unusual cause of death, caution should be taken to avoid contamination of the scene.
  1. Police may choose to photograph or document the placement of medical devices, medical equipment, etc. in suspicious situations, prior to their movement or removal.
- E. No personal items should be removed from the body with the exception of identification.
- F. Bodies may be covered with a sheet which does not shed fibers.
- G. If a body is moved, the location should be to a private, secure and nearby location.
- H. Bodies must be handled with care and respect for the deceased, the family and the public.

**III. Death in an Ambulance – termination of care**

- A. Patients with valid DNR orders being transported for any reason, whether due to an emergency condition or during an interfacility transfer, who experience cardiac or respiratory arrest shall have the DNR honored unless, before arresting, the patient expressly withdraws their DNR.
- B. Patients for whom transport was initiated but who, during transport, meet the criteria for either Dead on Scene or Termination of Resuscitation protocols,



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and for whom On-line Medical Control (OLMC) has approved a termination of resuscitation (as required by those protocols respectively), may have care terminated while still en route to the hospital.

**IV. Death in an Ambulance – transportation of body**

- A. In the event of a patient death in an ambulance, the body shall be transported to the original destination hospital.
  - 1. The patient's body shall be brought to the Emergency Department.
  - 2. The patient will be registered at the hospital.
  - 3. The Medical Examiner shall be contacted by the hospital.
- B. If a patient is being transferred to a nursing home or to their home, immediately following discharge from a hospital, and death is determined, the body should be brought back to the hospital from which they were discharged, unless the patient is a hospice patient.
  - 1. If the patient is a hospice patient and hospice will be meeting you at the destination, or the destination is a hospice facility, you may continue on to the destination and relinquish the body to hospice personnel.
  - 2. If the patient is a hospice patient, and hospice personnel will not be meeting you at the destination, continue on toward the destination, contact a supervisor from your agency and evaluate the situation. Where you ultimately go is dependent on how far you are from the destination, if family was intending to meet you at the destination, if the death was unexpected and any confounding factors. The body may not be left without there being a custodial transfer from EMS to an appropriate healthcare provider.
    - a) Consider contacting the hospice care provider
    - b) Consider consultation with online medical control
    - c) If the death was unexpected, contact local law enforcement.
- C. If a patient is being transferred from a facility to an appointment, or vice versa, where neither the starting or ending destination was a hospital:
  - a) If no DNR exists, treat and transport the patient to a hospital.
  - b) If a DNR exists but the patient is not a hospice patient, determine death, honor the DNR, and transport the body to a hospital
  - c) If a DNR exists and the patient is a hospice patient, determine death; honor the DNR, refer to IV(B)(1) and (2) above.

Protocol Source/Reference: Michigan 8.22 ME Notification and Body Disposition; Version 12/27/22.