

**TEL: 763-323-6400**

WWW.MIDWESTMEDICALEXAMINER.COM

We hope the information in this brochure has been helpful for you and your family. If we can be of any assistance, please contact us. Our normal business hours are 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday.

**My loved one has died.  
What do I do next?**

In this time of stress and sorrow, there are several decisions to make. Here are a few suggestions to help guide you and your loved ones through the process.

- ◆ Involve your family, friends and clergy for support. They can assist with decision making as you deal with this tragic and sometimes sudden news.
- ◆ Select a funeral home to assist you in making funeral arrangements and coordinating final disposition of your loved one's remains. If you do not know where to turn, you may wish to call a variety of funeral homes, ask questions, and obtain pricing. Any funeral home can assist with cremation arrangements.
- ◆ Once you have chosen a funeral home, the funeral director will make arrangements to pick up and transport your loved one's remains and property to the funeral home following the autopsy.
- ◆ Retain business cards, brochures, and paperwork given to you by law enforcement, medical examiner investigators, ambulance, and funeral home personnel.

**MIDWEST MEDICAL  
EXAMINER'S OFFICE**

*Serving multiple counties in  
Minnesota and Wisconsin.*

The death of a loved one can cause tremendous stress and sorrow. We hope this brochure will assist you during your grieving process and help answer questions about the autopsy process and the role of the Medical Examiner.

### **Where was the deceased taken?**

The deceased was taken to the county morgue of the Midwest Medical Examiner at 14341 Rhinestone Street NW, Ramsey, MN 55303. During normal business hours phone calls can be directed to **763-323-6400**. After hours, on weekends, or holidays, phone messages should be directed to **763-323-6420** or via email to [meinvestigator@co.anoka.mn.us](mailto:meinvestigator@co.anoka.mn.us). We will get back to you in a timely manner.

### **How long will this take?**

Normally the deceased will need to remain in the morgue for approximately 24 hours. Please consult with your funeral director to determine a date and time for services. The autopsy rarely delays the release of the body to the next-of-kin, however, final results of the autopsy report may take weeks. In occasional cases, microscopic or laboratory studies may delay the final report longer.

### **What is an autopsy?**

An autopsy is an examination of the body to determine the cause and manner of death and assess any abnormalities that may be present.

A complete forensic autopsy includes a review of the decedent's medical history. Small samples of internal organs are examined, and samples of bodily fluids are retained and tested for drugs and other substances. In deaths resulting from violence, other types of evidence may be collected and examined by a crime laboratory or other agency.

In some cases, it may be necessary to retain whole organs for specialized examination. After such exams, which may take weeks, the organ(s) are destroyed like surgical specimens in a hospital.

### **Will an autopsy always be performed?**

Not always. In many cases of sudden or unexpected death, evidence of preexisting natural disease will make an autopsy unnecessary.

### **Can a family refuse an autopsy?**

Minnesota law allows family to object to autopsy based on your loved one's religious beliefs. In certain instances, autopsies must be completed in the interest of public health or to answer medical or legal questions. We are open to discussion to try and accommodate family objections to autopsy while fulfilling our legal obligation.

### **What happens to property?**

Personal items transported with the deceased to the morgue are carefully inventoried and placed into safekeeping. This property is normally released to the funeral home making the removal from the morgue. In certain circumstances, property is retained by the Medical Examiner's office and is released directly to the legal next-of-kin or as directed in writing by that person. Arrangements for picking up property being held under that circumstance can be made by calling **763-323-6400**. Persons picking up property **MUST** have a photo ID and written authorization.

In cases of homicide, personal property and clothing are released to the investigating law enforcement agency.

Firearms are released to the law enforcement agency handling the investigation, that agency must be contacted for return of the weapon.

### **What about body or tissue donation?**

Depending on the circumstances of the death you may be contacted by a donor agency to discuss donation options and whether or not the deceased meets the criteria to participate in tissue donation. If you are interested in whole body donation through the University of Minnesota for medical research their contact number is 612-625-1111.

### **How do I obtain the death certificate?**

The funeral director you have chosen to handle the final arrangements for your loved one can assist you in getting a copy of the death certificate. *The Medical Examiner's office cannot issue copies of death certificates.*

### **How do I get a copy of the autopsy report?**

Immediate next-of-kin should submit a written request for the autopsy report to the address at the top of this brochure. Include your full name, address, daytime telephone number and your relationship to the decedent. There is a \$25 charge for this service, so a check or money order made out to "Midwest Medical Examiner's Office" must be included with the request.

### **Who has access to autopsy information and data the Medical Examiner collects?**

Basic demographic information and cause and manner of death are matters of public record under Minnesota law. The rest of the information is confidential and treated similarly to a medical record. This information is available only to immediate next-of-kin, legal representatives of the decedent's estate, and treating physicians. In cases of homicide, information may be released only to law enforcement agencies and the County Attorney until the matter has made its way through the courts.