
Unidentified Persons

1104.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

This policy details the legal mandates and additional requirements of Deputy Coroners and other Coroner Division members when investigating the death of an unidentified person.

1104.2 DEFINITION

An unidentified person is defined as any decedent whose identity is either unknown or has not yet been confirmed in conformity with Policy 1101.

1104.3 TEMPORARY IDENTIFIER

All unidentified males shall be referred to and labeled as "John Doe" until he is positively identified. All unidentified females shall be referred to and labeled as "Jane Doe" until she is positively identified.

1104.3.1 DOE NUMBERS

Each decedent that remains unidentified beyond the assigned Deputy Coroner's end-of-shift, shall also be identified using a sequential log number. This number shall be listed in the CME database as the middle name.

- (a) Example: "John #18 Doe"

1104.4 INVESTIGATION

When investigating the death of an unidentified person, Deputy Coroners shall make every effort to conduct a thorough investigation in an attempt to locate any evidence that will assist with identification. This includes but is not limited to:

- (a) Searching the decedent's person, residence, vehicle, and any other surrounding area that may contain evidence such as identification cards, medical or dental records, vital documents, address books, letters, etc. This search shall be performed within the parameters of the 4th amendment.
- (b) Interviewing witnesses for potential leads as to the decedent's identity.
- (c) Follow-up investigation as determined by case circumstances.
 1. Examples include contacting local law enforcement agencies for missing persons reports, or canvassing the death location and surrounding area.

1104.5 BODY EXAMINATION

In addition to performing the standard body examination, Deputy Coroners shall search for and document and/or photograph, with a scale, the following:

- (a) Gender
- (b) Apparent race

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- (c) Estimated age
- (d) Hair color
- (e) Eye color
- (f) Glasses
- (g) Facial hair
- (h) Dentition
- (i) Jewelry
- (j) Scars
- (k) Marks
- (l) Tattoos
- (m) Amputations
- (n) Clothing (Clothing description shall include color, size, and brand of each item)
- (o) The location of the remains, with as many specifics as possible
- (p) Observations pertinent to the estimation of the time of death
- (q) Any other unique or potentially significant detail regarding the decedent's features or appearance.

1104.6 INITIAL FORENSIC PROCESSING

In addition to the standard body intake procedure(s), the Forensic Assistant shall be responsible for the following additional tasks when processing an unidentified person:

- (a) Taking both frontal and lateral facial photographs, with scale.
- (b) Taking fingerprints and palm prints via Livescan, Kinderprint, and Mikrosil cast.
 - 1. Palm prints may be taken via Livescan and Kinderprint only.
- (c) Taking postmortem full body and dental x-rays.

1104.7 DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE NOTIFICATION

Deputy Coroners shall report the death of any unidentified person to the Department of Justice (DOJ) for entry into the National Crime Information Center database. This notification shall be performed via Teletype transmittal within 10 calendar days from the date the body or remains were discovered.

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1104.8 PRESS RELEASE

Within a reasonable amount of time and when case circumstances dictate, Deputy Coroners shall draft a press release including a brief summary of the death circumstances, a description of the unidentified person, and contact information for the Coroner Division Facility. The Deputy Coroner shall submit the draft to the on-duty Watch Commander, who shall in turn finalize and submit to the Department's Public Information Center for dissemination to various media outlets as needed.

- (a) For homicide deaths of unidentified persons, Deputy Coroners shall obtain the approval of the investigating law enforcement agency prior to the dissemination of any press release.

1104.9 ARTIST'S SKETCH

Within a reasonable amount of time and when case circumstances dictate, Deputy Coroners shall contact a Forensic Sketch Artist to arrange for completion of a sketch rendering of the decedent. Deputy Coroners may elicit assistance from the Forensic Assistant to coordinate this process as necessary. Upon completion, the final sketch shall be forwarded to the on-duty Watch Commander for distribution to the Coroner Division website, the Department's Public Information Officer, and other personnel, agencies, or media outlets as needed.

1104.10 DENTAL EXAMINATION

The Forensic Assistant shall contact the contract Forensic Odontologist to arrange for dental examination of the decedent. The Forensic Assistant shall submit any dental x-rays, charting, and other reports to DOJ within 45 calendar days from the date the body or remains were discovered.

1104.11 ANTHROPOLOGY EXAMINATION

When case circumstances dictate, the Forensic Assistant shall contact the contract Forensic Anthropologist for examination of the remains.

1104.12 COLLECTION OF DNA SAMPLES

The Forensic Assistant shall collect DNA samples, including but not limited to tissue, hair, or body fluids, from any unidentified person and submit samples to DOJ within 90 days from the date the body or remains were discovered.

1104.13 FINAL REPORT

If the decedent remains unidentified after all tests and examinations have been completed, Deputy Coroners shall prepare and submit a final report of investigation to DOJ within 180 days from the date the body or remains were discovered.

- (a) This report shall include all available test results, examination reports, artist's sketches, and x-rays, along with the appropriate DOJ Unidentified Deceased Reporting Form.

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1104.14 FINAL DISPOSITION

If the decedent has yet to be identified 365 days from the date the body or remains were discovered, Deputy Coroners may arrange for final disposition of the remains, with the assistance of Supervising Deputy Coroner in charge of indigent decedents. The Forensic Assistant shall extract the jaws (maxilla and mandilla, with teeth) prior to release of the remains for cremation or burial. Pursuant to Government Code 27521(f), the jaws shall be retained indefinitely, or one year after positive identification is made.

1104.15 CASE MANAGEMENT – LONG TERM UNIDENTIFIED PERSONS

If the decedent has yet to be identified 365 days from the date the body or remains were discovered, Deputy Coroners may submit the case file to his/her Supervising Deputy Coroner for final review. The Supervising Deputy Coroner will transition the file for long-term maintenance.

1104.16 UPDATES TO DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE REPORT

If any test or examination described in this policy results in the discovery of new information about the unidentified decedent's description or demographics, Deputy Coroners shall be responsible for informing DOJ by submitting an updated Teletype transmittal.

1104.17 NOTIFICATIONS WHEN AN UNIDENTIFIED PERSON IS IDENTIFIED

If/when an unidentified person is identified, Deputy Coroners shall be responsible for making all appropriate notifications to the decedent's next-of-kin, Coroner Division personnel, local law enforcement agencies, CAL-ID, DOJ, and any other involved or interested entities.

1104.18 DOCUMENTATION OF COMPLETED TASKS

All Coroner Division Facility members shall be responsible for documenting their respective completed tasks via the "Doe Tracking Form" in CME.