

# BATON ROUGE POLICE DEPARTMENT

General Order  
No.304

Effective Date  
11-01-1994

Revised Date  
09-01-2016

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Subject: Deaths

Reviewed 9/1/16

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## POLICY

It is the policy of this department to investigate any death, whether it appears natural or otherwise, to properly document the cause(s) of such death and ensure that no evidence is lost or concealed.

## PROCEDURES

### **I. Deaths of Apparent Natural (or unknown) Causes**

- A. Upon arriving at the scene of an apparent death by natural causes (other than homicide or suicide); the officer's first responsibility is to preserve the scene.
- B. Officers will not interfere with medical personnel engaged in life saving techniques. If EMS is on the scene, they will contact the Coroner's office. If not, it is the officer's responsibility.
- C. The following will be notified regarding any death:
  1. The Coroner's Office (the Coroner has the sole authority for the removal of a body).
  2. Homicide division.
- D. Do not search or move the body without the consent of Detectives in charge of the scene, or Coroner.
- E. Officers having contact with the body should minimize exposure by using proper procedures and equipment when contagious diseases are suspected.
- F. Officers will gather as much information as possible with regard to the victim's medical condition, medication, and attending physician.
- G. A report will be filed appropriate to the incident (offense, supplementary, or preliminary investigation).

### **II. Possible Suicide or Homicide**

- A. Upon arriving at the scene of an apparent suicide or homicide, the officer shall:
  1. Secure the scene; notify supervisor, and Homicide detectives.
  2. Have potential witnesses remain at the scene for questioning by detectives.
  3. Detain possible suspect(s) until detectives arrive on the scene.
  4. Do not move the body or potential evidence.
  5. Keep unauthorized persons away from body and potential evidence (this includes law enforcement personnel not directly involved in the investigation).
  6. Call for additional assistance if needed to protect scene or control crowds.

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7. Call for crime scene personnel.
8. Advise the Communications Center to notify Coroner, District Attorney, and Media Relations.
9. Collect as much information as possible.
10. File the appropriate report (supplemental, preliminary, or offense).

### **III. Traffic Fatality/Possible Fatality**

Upon arriving at the scene of an apparent traffic fatality the officer will follow the same procedures as in the preliminary investigation of a homicide or suicide (II.A, above). However the Traffic Homicide Unit will conduct the follow-up investigation. Refer to G.O. 225; section II, for additional information.

### **IV. Supervisor Responsibility**

Major incidents require the on-scene response by a supervisor. It will be the responsibility of the supervisor to assign tasks to field personnel to secure the scene, establish crowd control or complete the investigation as quickly and thoroughly as possible. The supervisor will coordinate the response of emergency services, investigative services and any other service which may be needed.

### **V. Notifying Next-of-Kin for Civilians When Fatalities or Serious Injuries Have Occurred**

- A. If the fatality/injury is the apparent result of foul play, the investigating detective(s) will be responsible for notifying the deceased/injured person's next-of-kin.
- B. If the fatality/injury is the result of a traffic accident, the supervisor at the scene may notify the deceased/injured person's next-of-kin or may designate a subordinate officer to make the notification.
- C. In the event an officer has been dispatched relative to emergency notification generated by a phone-in report, the officer will:
  1. Attempt to contact a relative or neighbor of the next-of-kin to be notified who is willing to accompany the officer to the residence of the next-of-kin (if the relative or neighbor can be located within a reasonable amount of time).
  2. Make as direct a statement as possible to the survivor; do not give them false hope.
  3. Make the notification inside their place of residence, not outside or on the doorstep.
  4. Remain on the scene long enough to determine if the survivor(s) are emotionally stable and not a danger to themselves.

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**VI. Autopsies**

- A. An autopsy may be ordered by the Coroner's office for any suspicious or unnatural death or if the deceased is an infant under 1 year old (with exceptions).
- B. Autopsies may also be requested for deaths resulting from automobile crashes and from aircraft accidents.
- C. Autopsies are conducted at a location specified by the Coroner's Office:
- D. The doctor ordering the autopsy will require a crime scene unit to take photographs and the officer/detective(s) with knowledge of the case to aid the physician in making his determination.