Policy Title: Crime Scene or Suspicious Death
Section: Operations
Adoption Date: 07/2000
Date of Most Recent Update/Review: 01/2016
CAAS Criteria Reference:

Purpose:

This policy establishes guidelines for the situation involving the death of a person outside of the hospital setting.

Policy:

1. In the event that upon arrival to the scene and after assessing the patient, the ECP decides to either not start or terminate resuscitative measures, the following procedure will be followed.

- If law enforcement is not on scene, they should be notified.
- Do not disturb the body or anything around the decedent.
- Have Westcom notify the Medical Examiner’s Office after consultation with the police officer on scene or the detective case officer if present. West Des Moines is now in four counties. Polk County Medical Examiner's office shall be notified if the scene is east of 60th St and Dallas County Medical Examiner shall be notified if the scene is west of 60th St. Warren County and Madison County Medical Examiners should be notified when in those jurisdictions.
- A pre-hospital death report form should be completed detailing your findings. A copy of this report should be given to personnel from the Medical Examiner’s Office or the funeral home assuming custody of the body.
- In the event that you do not make access to the patient then a pre-hospital death report will not be completed. A normal patient care report will be completed with the information reported by the Police Officer.
- If the death involves an on the job incident of a City Employee, immediate family member of an employee, a homicide, or death of a suspicious nature, the EMS
Shift Supervisor will be notified. The shift supervisor will then notify the Chief of EMS and the Assistant Chief of Operations.

- If there is a request by Medical Examiner Personnel or Law Enforcement that we transport the body to the morgue, the shift supervisor will be contacted for authorization.
- ECP’s should remain on the scene until the medical examiner or a police officer arrives. If a police officer is going to remain on scene, the EMS crew can go back in service when they have gathered appropriate information. If the police officer does not stay on scene, the EMS crew should remain until the Medical Examiner’s Office arrives on the scene. Arrangements should be made with the police officer to return to the scene if the EMS crew is needed to respond to another call.

2. If upon arrival at the scene it is determined that the death scene is an apparent crime scene the following will apply.
   - If the police department is on the scene prior to EMS arrival, entry into the scene will be at their discretion. If entry is denied, the police department assumes responsibility for the body and the determination of death. The police department will assume responsibility for any delay in care to the patient caused by limited access to the crime scene by officers. A death report will not be completed by the ECP unless they have contact with the patient and determine death has occurred. A run report will be completed documenting the call and officer in charge of the scene.
   - If requested, one Paramedic can accompany an officer into the scene to confirm that death has occurred. The Paramedic should then fill out the death report as usual.
   - If ECP’s arrive at a crime scene prior to law enforcement, entry into the scene should be limited if death is determined. Once death is determined, all ECP’s should withdraw from the area and should keep others out of the area until law enforcement arrives. Nothing should be moved or touched unless absolutely necessary to determine death (i.e., lifting a shirt to place cardiac electrodes). Preservation of the scene is essential for the police department’s investigation. EMS techniques should be altered when possible to preserve evidence.
   - Entry into a known crime scene that is unsecured will not be done until police arrive. ECP’s should stage at a safe location when arriving at an unsecured scene. The dispatcher should be advised of your staging status and should be told to advise when the police department has secured the scene and request EMS entry.