

Code: 4443

Title: MEDICOLEGAL DEATH INVESTIGATOR

SUMMARY: Investigates circumstances surrounding unattended or unnatural deaths, assists Forensic Pathologists, law enforcement personnel, Medicolegal Death Investigator Supervisor, other Pima County Forensic Science Center staff and funeral homes in the disposition of cases. This classification is distinguished from the Criminal Investigator and law enforcement classifications which conduct legal investigations of criminal, civil and/or juvenile matters and assist attorneys in the preparation of cases for trial.

DUTIES/RESPONSIBILITIES: (Work assignments may vary depending on the department's needs and will be communicated to the applicant or incumbent by the supervisor.)

Conducts death scene investigations including the collection, preservation and protection of evidence and associated materials from the scene, scene photography, and related pathological studies;
Removes deceased from death scenes and transports remains to the Forensic Science Center;
Surveys death scenes to identify potential hazards and takes/directs necessary remedial or protective actions;
Investigates and records time and circumstances at time of death, next-of-kin, background and medical history and records of deceased;
Assists Forensic Pathologists with postmortem examinations, by taking notes and photographs as required;
Maintains chain-of-custody for evidentiary materials for proper court presentation and releases evidence to appropriate law enforcement officers and agencies;
Locates and interviews witnesses, medical personnel, and relatives of deceased persons and coordinates findings of medical investigation with law enforcement, courts and/or other agencies;
Performs body/clothing inspection for personal property documentation upon arrival with decedent at the Forensic Science Center;
Initiates and prepares identification band, associated paperwork, and logs decedent information into the Forensic Science Center database;
Secures personal property of deceased and insures release to proper relatives or court-designated receivers;
Determines legal jurisdiction for death cases;
Conducts investigations to insure positive identification of deceased persons, to include fingerprinting for analysis by law enforcement agencies;
Prepares remains for viewing and identification by next-of-kin or other appropriate parties;
Determines need for, and requests, anthropological analysis of known or suspected human remains;
Confirms identification of deceased and personal property prior to release from Forensic Science Center to funeral home;
Coordinates release of remains to funeral homes and public fiduciary offices;
Maintains close liaison with law enforcement, courts and other agencies to promote cooperation and insure communications on matters of mutual interest;
Acts as liaison/coordinator with medical institutions/agencies and decedent's next-of-kin for organ/tissue donations and with foreign consular authorities for disposition of unidentified deceased undocumented aliens;
Reviews death certificates and related reports (e.g., toxicology, anthropometric, etc.) to insure accuracy of information and allowable release to law enforcement, courts and next-of-kin/legal representatives;
Prepares written reports, maintains investigative and evidence records and duty logs;
Transports medical specimens, bio-hazardous materials, medical records, evidence, supplies, equipment and inter-office mail within Pima County;
Performs operator-level servicing and maintenance of assigned vehicles and specialized forensic equipment;
May testify in court and before grand juries regarding investigative activities;
May coordinate the activities of other investigators or law enforcement personnel and the use of technical medical and investigative equipment;
May conduct drug/medical collection and disposal.

KNOWLEDGE & SKILLS:**Knowledge of:**

- principles, practices, and techniques of death investigations;
- principles, practices, methods, techniques, and equipment of forensic investigative work;
- crime scene and forensic photographic techniques;
- county, state and federal laws, rules and regulations pertaining to death investigations;
- medical terminology and human physiology and anatomy;
- health and safety hazards associated with the handling of human remains and potentially hazardous evidentiary materials;
- laws, rules and regulations for the preservation of evidence and chain-of-custody;
- traffic laws, ordinances and regulations governing the safe operation of motor vehicles;
- report analysis and preparation;
- basic computer applications;
- reading and interpreting street guides, maps and GPS.

Skill in:

- planning and conducting thorough medico-legal death scene and forensic investigations;
- gathering data and conducting sensitive interviews with witnesses, medical personnel, and relatives of deceased persons;
- documenting death scenes in writing and through use of photographic and electronic equipment;
- preserving and safely handling and storing of evidence and maintaining the chain-of-custody;
- computer operations including familiarity with common applications including, outlook, MSWord and Excel;
- operating and performing operator-level maintenance and servicing of photographic and electronic equipment;
- processing, printing, and duplicating film negatives, positive transparencies, prints and electronic images;
- communicating effectively, both orally and in writing;
- maintaining required security and confidentiality of information created or encountered in course of assigned duties;
- maintaining manual and automated records and preparing routine, recurring and special reports.

MINIMUM QUALIFICATIONS:**EITHER:**

(1) An Associate's degree from an accredited college, university, or vocational-technical school with a major in criminal justice/law enforcement, pathology, forensics, social work, public health, biology, microbiology, chemistry, anthropology, physician's assistant, nursing or pre-med and two years of medical investigative experience.

OR:

(2) One year of experience as a Pathology/Forensic Technician, Diener, Forensic Laboratory Technician or Forensic Evidence Technician/Specialist, Registered Nurse (RN), Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN), Emergency Medical Technician (EMT), Paramedic or certified/sworn law enforcement officer;

OR:

(3) Satisfactory completion of a course in Death Investigations from an accredited college, university community college or vocational-technical school or training from a governmental/military/accrediting agency in death/criminal/accident investigations (e.g., National Transportation Safety Board-NTSB; Occupational Health & Safety Administration-OSHA, Bureau of Mine Safety, Federal Department of Justice/FBI, etc.).

OR:

(4) One year of experience with Pima County as a Pathologist Assistant, Forensic Field Agent,

Forensic Technician, Criminal Investigator Specialist, Criminal Investigator or Communicable Disease Investigator.

OTHER REQUIREMENTS:

Licenses and Certificates: Registry certification by the American Board of Medicolegal Death Investigators must be obtained within 2 years of hire. All positions require a valid Arizona Class D driver license at the time of application. Failure to obtain/maintain the required licensures or certifications shall be grounds for termination.

Special Notice Items: Department of Labor Regulation CFR Part 1910.1030 requires notification that this category may have a high risk of exposure to blood-borne pathogens. In accordance with OSHA and Pima County guidelines, safety training, equipment, Hepatitis B and TB Screening will be provided. All positions require satisfactory completion of a background investigation by law enforcement agencies or private agency for the 2 year period prior to appointment due to need for access to law enforcement, detention, courts and corrections facilities, records, communications systems and evidentiary materials. Pre-/Post-appointment drug testing may be required of all positions. All positions require the ability to work in the presence of noxious odors and offensive sights involving human remains.

Physical/Sensory Requirements: All employees in this classification must be able to lift and move weights up to 100 pounds unassisted for brief periods and for short distances. Employees must be able to traverse rough, unimproved terrain on foot, in extremes of weather (e.g., heat, cold, etc.). Normal color vision is required, due to need to examine and classify evidentiary materials and to process and interpret photographic and electronic images.

This classification specification is intended to indicate the basic nature of positions allocated to the classification and examples of typical duties that may be assigned. It does not imply that all positions within the classification perform all of the duties listed, nor does it necessarily list all possible duties that may be assigned.

Pima County

06/01/89
Updated 1/31/14(lsg)