

**NATIONAL  
TEST SPECIFICATIONS  
FIELD: MEDICOLEGAL DEATH INVESTIGATOR**

General Information:

Title: Medicolegal Death Investigator  
Type: Objective Type (paper and pencil)  
Items: 240  
Time: 4 hours

<b>AREAS COVERED:</b>	<b>% OF TEST</b>	<b># OF ITEMS</b>
A. Interacting with Federal, State and Local Agencies	3%	10
B. Communicating	10%	25
C. Interacting with Families	8%	20
D. Investigating Techniques	33%	70
E. Identifying and Preserving Evidence	10%	25
F. Maintaining Ethical and Legal Responsibilities	9%	20
G. Demonstrating Scientific Knowledge	25%	60
H. Coping with Job Related Stress	2%	10

**A. INTERACTING WITH FEDERAL, STATE AND LOCAL AGENCIES**

- A1. Determine jurisdictional responsibility  
Includes the proper methods used to determine medical examiner/coroner jurisdiction.
- A2. Determine the scope of agency responsibility  
Includes the proper methods used to determine deaths reportable to the medical examiner/coroner office.
- A3. Report critical data  
Includes proper methods of defining critical data and determining how data is to be reported.
- A4. Share critical data  
Includes proper methods of releasing critical data to outside agencies including forms used.
- A5. Identify support agencies  
Includes deaths reportable to outside agencies, outside agencies that support the medical examiner/coroner office, as well as decedent's families.
- A6. Collect essential agency data  
Includes methods used to define essential data, distribution report forms, and other agency interactions.
- A7. Arrange for organ and tissue procurement  
Includes organ procurement agencies, forms, recovery timing, organ and tissue types typically used in transplant and research.
- A8. Certify the death (completing the death certificates)  
Includes the death certificate format, release timing, and proper completion techniques.

## **B. COMMUNICATING**

- B9. Notify next of kin  
Includes methods used to make proper notification, identification of legal next-of-kin, and release of information.
- B10. Maintain confidentiality  
Includes methods used to maintain confidentiality within an office and external to office.
- B11. Interact with law enforcement personnel  
Includes agency cooperation practices, statutory responsibility, and objectivity between agencies involved in the investigation.
- B12. Interact with funeral directors  
Includes strategies used to interact with funeral directors, as well as roles and responsibilities for families, investigator and funeral home directors.
- B13. Write narrative reports  
Includes content of the narrative investigative report, its structure and use in the overall investigation of a death.
- B14. Complete report forms  
Includes the proper use of report forms within the medical examiner/coroner office as well as the use of report forms as shared documents.
- B15. Use effective interviewing skills (witnesses)  
Includes techniques and strategies used to interview witnesses involved in the death investigation, including family, friends and associates.
- B16. Communicate with the pathologist  
Includes basic forensic medical terminology and the relationships that exist between the medical examiner/coroners investigators and the forensic pathologist who performs the autopsy.
- B17. Maintain relations with the media  
Includes strategies and techniques used to work with the media regarding public information release and accountability.
- B18. Notify/Communicate with treating physician  
Includes general medical terminology typically used by emergency room physicians as well as family practice physicians. Also included, the relationship that exists between the physician who last treated the decedent and the investigation.
- B19. Utilize telephone etiquette  
Includes proper use of the telephone within the professional medical examiner/coroner office, strategies used in gathering information over the phone, and methods used to communicate with individuals over the phone.

## **C. INTERACTING WITH FAMILIES**

- C20. Obtain information  
Includes methods used to gather investigative information from family members during the investigation (a time of stress).
- C21. Explain procedures to families  
Includes strategies used to assist families to understanding medical examiner/coroner procedures related to the autopsy and the investigative process.
- C22. Respect family requests  
Includes various types of religious objections to the autopsy and strategies used to

- overcome those objections (as necessary).
- C23. Report findings to the family  
Includes methods of interaction with family members during the release of medical examiner/coroner findings, autopsy results and appropriate timetables for release of additional information.
  - C24. Prepare family for identification viewing  
Includes strategies used by investigators to inform families as to the condition of the decedent and the possible results linked to viewing the body.
  - C25. Respond to family's reactions  
Includes strategies used by investigators to support family members during and after the identification viewing.
  - C26. Perform an investigative follow-up interview  
Includes methods of conducting the follow-up interview with family members, friends and associates of the decedent.

#### **D. INVESTIGATING DEATHS**

- D27. Determine scene safety (public health)  
Includes methods used to determine scene safety prior to entry.
- D28. Secure the scene  
Includes methods used to interact with support agencies in the establishment of the scene.
- D29. Validate death  
Includes methods used to assure death has been established and documented.
- D30. Identify human remains  
Includes knowledge of basic anthropology.
- D31. Photograph the scene and the body  
Includes proper uses of photography, of both scene and body. Also includes basic knowledge of photographic equipment and usage.
- D32. Conduct the physical examination  
Includes proper methods of conducting the on-scene physical examination of body
- D33. Document the death scene  
Includes systematic methods of documenting the death scene for later use by investigative staff and outside agency personnel.
- D34. Write descriptive information  
Includes strategies used to write investigative reports that describe the scene, including the environment and the body.
- D35. Draw specimens  
Includes standard medical protocol and methods used to draw fluids (blood, vitreous, and urine) from the decedent for analysis by lab personnel.
- D36. Identify forensic instrumentation  
Includes personal protective equipment, forensic equipment, forms, and scene processing aids.
- D37. Recognize manners of death  
Includes the five typically recognized manners of death and standard methods of determining each.
- D38. Investigate multiple fatalities  
Includes general knowledge of mass disaster protocol.

## **E. IDENTIFYING AND PRESERVING EVIDENCE**

- E39. Distinguish between personal property and evidence  
Includes documentation procedures used to maintain evidence and personal property and the distinguishing factors between each.
- E40. Ensure chain of custody  
Includes need for chain of custody, methods of maintaining chain, and rationale for maintaining chain of custody
- E41. Facilitate analysis of evidence  
Includes proper evidence collection techniques for various of evidence.

## **F. MAINTAINING ETHICAL AND LEGAL RESPONSIBILITIES**

- F42. Maintain the dignity of the deceased  
Includes methods used by investigators to maintain the dignity of the deceased at the scene and throughout the investigation.
- F43. Dispose of unclaimed/unidentified remains  
Includes common methods and requirements for disposing of unclaimed and/or unidentified remains.
- F44. Provide testimony  
Includes strategy used by investigators, medical examiner/coroner offices when served with a subpoena.
- F45. Identify potential conflicts of interest  
Includes relationships between medical examiner/coroner offices with such outside service providers are: funeral homes, ambulance services, cleaning companies, etc.
- F46. Safeguard personal property against theft  
Includes methods used to protect decedent's property, until release.
- F47. Project a positive/professional image  
Includes important factors involved in the perception of the medical examiner/coroner office by the community and support agencies.

## **G. DEMONSTRATING SCIENTIFIC KNOWLEDGE**

- G48. Demonstrate knowledge of forensic pathology  
Includes basic forensic medical terminology, traumatic injuries, traumatic artifacts, therapeutic interventions, antemortem injuries on the body, postmortem artifacts on the body, time of death establishment. Decomposition, signs of death, systematic examination of external body, body systems, medical services, and various types of death.
- G49. Demonstrate knowledge of forensic science  
Includes basic forensic science terminology, the role of outside forensic experts in the medicolegal death investigation, drug names and terminology (Physician's Desk Reference), legal laboratory tests, gunshot wounds, and firearms documentation.
- G50. Demonstrate medical knowledge  
Includes basic medical terminology, universal precautions, medical anatomy, internal anatomy, basic physiology, use of medial charts and reports, identification of human disease, common medications, hospital bureaucracy.

## **H. COPING WITH JOB-RELATED STRESS**

H51. Identify the warning signs of stress

Includes common warning signs of stress, mood swings, behavior changes, and effects on job and domestic life.

H52. Identify appropriate coping mechanism (for stress)

Includes lifestyle changing, professional assist programs, and inappropriate methods of coping with stress.