



1832 Flower Street  
Bakersfield, California 93305

## **FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

### **Why is the Coroner's Office involved?**

The Coroner is required by state law to investigate all deaths that fall under Coroner jurisdiction. Coroner jurisdiction ranges from deceased individuals who had no regular doctor to individuals who sustain some type of traumatic injury, such as falls, industrial deaths, traffic accidents, suicides, homicides, etc. It also includes deaths where the attending Medical Doctor is unable to state a cause of death or cases where the deceased has not been seen by a doctor for 20 days prior to death.

### **Where are the deceased taken?**

When necessary, the deceased is transported to the Kern County Coroner's Office for autopsy or safekeeping, and later released to the family's authorized funeral home or cremation service.

### **Will I be able to see my family member or friend at the Coroner's Office?**

No, the Coroner's Office does not allow public visitations. The deceased will be released to a funeral home for viewing.

### **What should I do if a deceased family member is at the Coroner's Office?**

Contact the funeral home of your choice. They are prepared to assist you in making the decisions necessary during this difficult time. They work closely with the Coroner's Office to arrange the release of your loved one from our facility. They will also assist you in deciding how many certified copies of the death certificate you may need and will order them for you when they file their paperwork with the county.

**Are autopsies performed on all deceased individuals?**

No, roughly, one-third of all deaths investigated by the Coroner’s Office involve an autopsy examination. Autopsies are performed only on those cases where it is required by law or where it is necessary to determine the cause of death.

**Am I required to pay for a family member’s autopsy?**

No.

**When can I schedule the funeral service?**

The Coroner’s Office will complete the examination as soon as possible. The selected funeral home will contact the Coroner to obtain a time line about when the exam may be completed.

**What if I have no money for funeral expenses?**

If the decedent or legal next-of-kin are indigent, then the legal next-of-kin may apply for an indigent cremation. Applications may be obtained from the Coroner’s Office during regular business hours.

**Will we be able to find out the cause of death?**

Yes, when the results become available. If cause of death is immediately known, the death certificate will indicate cause of death and will be provided to the mortuary at the time of the funeral arrangements.

If cause of death is not immediately known, the death certificate will be issued at the time of the funeral arrangements with “pending” as the cause of death. In these cases, the cause of death requires further studies such as microscopic and toxicological testing. When the results are returned and the doctor makes the final determination, usually in about 90 days, Coroner staff will notify the next-of-kin of the cause of death. Subsequently, Coroner staff will submit an amendment to the death certificate for the cause of death.

**How do I get copies of the Death Certificate?**

Death Certificates are initially ordered for the family by the funeral director handling the final arrangements. Copies may also be obtained from Vital Records located at the Kern County Public Health Department, 1800 Mt. Vernon Avenue, Bakersfield, CA 93305. The Coroner’s Office does not dispense Death Certificates.

Death Certificates are not completed until the deceased is transferred to the mortuary handling the arrangements.

Amended Death Certificates for cause of death may take 90 days from the date the amendment is submitted before it can be issued by Kern County Vital Records.

**How do I find out information when I have questions?**

You may contact the Coroner's Office during normal business hours, Monday-Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., excluding holidays, or by calling (661) 868-0100. If the Deputy Coroner assigned to the case is not on duty, any Deputy Coroner will assist you with any questions you may have.

**How do I obtain property taken by the Coroner's Office?**

Generally, property is released with the deceased to the funeral home that is providing arrangements.

The Coroner's Office may release property directly to the legal next-of-kin, or to any other person furnishing written authorization from the legal next-of-kin. The Coroner's Office releases property during regular business hours, excluding holidays. Proof of identification is required.

**What are the Coroner Office business hours?**

Excluding holidays, the Coroner Office is open Monday thru Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. The office is closed to the public for lunch between 12:00 p.m. to 1:00 p.m.

**Where is the Coroner's Office located?**

While our mailing address is 1832 Flower Street, Bakersfield, CA 93305, our physical address is not on Flower Street. The Coroner Office is located on College Avenue in the same building as Campus Pharmacy in the Kern Medical Complex.