

Saskatchewan Coroners Service

The Coroner's Investigation

We are committed to conducting a thorough and independent examination of the circumstances surrounding sudden, unexpected and unnatural deaths in order to improve the health, safety and quality of life in the Province of Saskatchewan.



We extend our sincere sympathy for your loss. This information may be helpful to you in the coming days and weeks.

The Coroner's Authority to Investigate

The Saskatchewan Coroners Service is responsible for the investigation of all sudden, unexpected and unnatural deaths as described in section 7 of The Coroners Act, 1999.

Coroners or their equivalents have long existed around the world to investigate deaths. Typically they determine the circumstances of death and whether such deaths could be prevented. In 1906, Saskatchewan enacted legislation to provide for coroners. The current legislation provides for coroners to conduct independent and impartial investigations or inquests when someone dies of sudden, unexpected and unnatural causes.

Who is the Coroner?

Coroners are appointed by the Chief Coroner for the province of Saskatchewan. In Saskatchewan, Coroners come from a wide variety of backgrounds including medical, legal, business or investigations.

A Coroner conducts an investigation into all sudden, unexpected, and unnatural deaths occurring in the province of Saskatchewan. The Coroner can provide information and support to grieving families.

The Role of the Coroner and Police

The Coroner directs the investigation in order to determine the identity of the person, how, when, where and by what means the person died. The Coroner is assisted by the police.

In situations where foul play is suspected or apparent, the police will direct a criminal investigation and they will be assisted by the Coroner.

The Coroner's investigation is fact finding and does not assign fault or blame.

The Coroner's Investigation

For the purpose of the investigation, the Coroner has the authority under section 13 of The Coroners Act, 1999 to secure the scene of death, conduct interviews, collect information, inspect and seize documents, specimens and objects, and take possession of the body. When the body is not needed for the purpose of the investigation, the Coroner will release the body to the family to make arrangements of the family's choosing.

The Coroner consults and works with a number of agencies and people including police, family members, Occupational Health and Safety, the Transportation Safety Board, the Highway Traffic Board, Social Services, Corrections Canada, Saskatchewan Corrections, Public Safety and Policing, the Health Authority, physicians and other health care workers. These agencies may receive a Request for Access from a coroner in accordance with section 13(1) for records on a decedent deemed necessary for the investigation.

The Post Mortem (Autopsy)

In some circumstances, the Coroner may require an autopsy to help determine the cause of death, assist in identification, document injuries, or to assist in determining the manner of death.

The Coroner **will not** authorize an autopsy for clinical interest or research.

Is family consent required for an autopsy?

No. The Coroner may discuss the need for an autopsy with the family and will consider the family's wishes. However, the Coroner will decide on the need for an autopsy based on the circumstances of each death.

The autopsy is completed by a pathologist. There are no costs to the family for the autopsy when authorized by a Coroner. The Coroner will arrange for transportation of the body for the purposes of an autopsy. In most cases, the autopsy will be completed within five business days.

What happens after the autopsy?

Once the autopsy is completed, the Coroner will discuss preliminary findings with the next of kin.

The body is generally released to a funeral home of family's choice. The funeral home will then handle any arrangements including picking up the body. Your funeral director will provide further information and instruction.

The final autopsy report commonly takes about six months for the pathologist to complete, as the pathologist must await all test results to consider in the final report.

The Coroner's Findings

After considering the results of the investigation, including the final autopsy report, the Coroner will issue a report (Report of Coroner) summarizing the investigative findings. The Coroner may include specific recommendations to individuals and/or agencies to prevent similar deaths from occurring.

Inquests

An Inquest Coroner presides over an inquest which is a public hearing conducted before a six-member jury. Witnesses are called and evidence is heard by the jury. Inquests may be held to determine the facts and circumstances surrounding the death and to bring dangerous practices to light.

An inquest does not make a finding of fault. Findings of fault are determined in courts through trials on criminal charges or claims for civil liability.

Physician's (Coroner's) Statement

Insurers often require a physician's or coroner's statement as proof of death. If the death is investigated by a Coroner, the statement must be completed by the Saskatchewan Coroners Service. See contact information on this pamphlet to request completion of the physician's (or coroner's) statement by the Saskatchewan Coroners Service.

Death Certificates may be required for a variety of purposes including settlement of the estate. A death certificate may be obtained from eHealth.

Call Toll Free: 1-855-347-5465

www.ehealthsask.ca

Email: vitalstatistics@eHealthSask.ca

How do I get a copy of the Autopsy Report or Coroner's Report?

The next of kin, family members or legal representatives of the estate can request a copy of these reports. The request must be in writing, giving the deceased's full name, date of birth, date of death, and the requester's relationship to the deceased. The next of kin may also send in a written request to have reports sent to a third party, such as a family doctor, legal or insurance representatives.

Given the nature of the examinations and tests that need to be completed, it may take six to twelve months for the Coroner to complete the investigation and issue the Report of Coroner.

Contact the Saskatchewan Coroners Service

Email: coroner@gov.sk.ca

Saskatchewan.ca/coroner

#1050 - 2010 12th Avenue

Regina, Saskatchewan S4P 0M3

Phone: 1.866.592.7845 Fax: 306.787.5503

OR

#3 - 2345 Avenue C North

Saskatoon, Saskatchewan S7L 5Z5

Phone: 1.888.824.0491 Fax: 306.964.1896