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BASIC DEATH INVESTIGATION

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- ▶ Death investigation does not always refer to a suspicious death.
- ▶ Death investigation refers to any investigation involving a death.


DEATH INVESTIGATION OVERVIEW

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THOUGH EVERY DEATH SCENE SHOULD INITIALLY BE TREATED AS A SUSPICIOUS DEATH, THERE WILL BE TIMES WHEN THERE ARE MORE CLUES. IF YOU COME ACROSS A SCENE WITH LARGE AMOUNTS OF BLOOD, IT MAY BE A SUSPICIOUS DEATH. PHOTO COURTESY OF THE LUBBOCK (TX) POLICE DEPARTMENT.


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► Natural: this type of death refers to any death that occurred due to natural causes. (heart attack, disease, other illness, old age)


TYPES OF DEATH INVESTIGATION

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► Accidental: this type of death occurs when a death happened unexpectedly and unintentionally. (vehicle accident, a fall, overdose, etc)

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► Suicide: this type of death occurs on purpose but through the hand of the decedent.

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- ▶ Homicide: this type of death occurs when an individual kills another. Many times it is intentional. (we will get into when it is not later)

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THIS DEATH SCENE COULD BE A RESULT OF SUICIDE, ACCIDENTAL, OR HOMICIDE. HOWEVER, THE FACT THAT THERE IS MORE THAN ONE SHELL CASING POINTS TO HOMICIDE. PHOTO COURTESY OF THE LUBBOCK (TX) POLICE DEPARTMENT.


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- ▶ Manner of death refers to the type of death meaning, homicide, accidental, suicide, or natural.

MANNER OF DEATH VERSUS CAUSE OF DEATH

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- ▶ The cause of death refers to how it happened. Such as gunshot wound, strangulation, overdose, etc.

CAUSE


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- ▶ Though crime scene investigators, detectives, and death investigators all work together at death scenes, there are certain parts of the scene that police cannot touch until the state designated death investigator arrives.

WHAT IS YOURS AT A SCENE AND
WHAT IS THE DEATH INVESTIGATORS


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- ▶ The location where the incident took place.
- ▶ Any evidence in the crime scene itself.

WHAT BELONGS TO THE POLICE?

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- ▶ The body and anything on it or in the decedent's pockets.

WHAT BELONGS TO THE DEATH INVESTIGATOR?


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- ▶ The first responding officers must secure the location and ensure that is safe.
- ▶ The area of the crime scene should be taped off with police tape. (always tape off more than what you actually need-this gives you space and this way you can work from the outside in, ensuring the entire scene is taped off)
- ▶ Detectives must be called.
- ▶ Crime scene investigators must be called.
- ▶ Officers should canvass the area for any witness statements.
- ▶ Detectives should conduct interviews with involved parties.


HANDLING THE SCENE, A CHECK LIST

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- ▶ Crime scene investigators process the scene. This includes photos, scene assessment, and evidence.
- ▶ The death investigator, (or medical examiner or coroner, depending on your area) arrives.
- ▶ CSI's should take additional photos of the body while the death investigator is there. If any swabs need to be collected, it must be done with the permission and within the presence of the death investigator and must be documented.


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- ▶ Anything out of place. If your gut says it's wrong or significant, it is.
- ▶ Any weapons.
- ▶ Any evidence relevant to the case.
- ▶ DNA evidence-blood and other bodily fluids.
- ▶ Missing evidence.

WHAT EVIDENCE SHOULD YOU LOOK FOR?


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- ▶ Remember DO NOT move the body until the death investigator arrives on scene.
- ▶ Blood pooling-this will indicate what position they are or have been in and suggests how long the person has been deceased.
- Pallor Mortis: This is the first stage, and it is when color begins to drain from the body.
- Algor Mortis: When the temperature of the body begins to drop. The second stage or sign of death.
- Rigor Mortis: When the body become stiff. Third stage of death.
- Liver Mortis: Technically the fourth stage of death but one that is more apparent than other signs. This is when blood pools in lividity. Pooling occurs since the heart is no longer pumping blood through the body.

TIME OF DEATH-THINGS TO LOOK FOR


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- When was the last time you saw the decedent?
- Do you know of any ailments or illnesses the decedent may have?
- Did they mention to you where they were going?
- Who did they speak to last?

INTERVIEWS-IT IS IMPORTANT TO GATHER THE RIGHT FACTS


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- ▶ You must find some type of identification of the decedents.
- ▶ Any weapons
- ▶ Any narcotics
- ▶ If it is a suspicious death or even a suicide you must process the crime scene which will mean collecting much more evidence such as trace, biological, possibly phones/ electronics and any other items involved.

EVIDENCE TO COLLECT

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- ▶ Thank you for taking this course!

CONCLUSION

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