



Forensic Death investigation Formation and Timeline

<u>YEAR</u>	<u>CORONERS</u>
1194	The title and position of Coroner was formally established in medieval England in 1194 when the articles of Eyre were promulgated.
1247	The first institutionalization of death investigation is thought to have been in ancient China where a Confucian emphasis was placed on Effective government administration.
1877	The US inherited the coronial system of England. Reformers of the progressive movement at the turn of the 20 th Century pushed to replace what they called corrupt elected coroners, with appointed physician medical examiners.
1917	RCWs First Amendment. See Law Attached Law did not include Reports and records of autopsy and postmortems confidential.
1918	The first modern medical examiner's office was established in New York City in 1918.
1927	The <i>International Association of Coroners and Medical Examiners (IACME)</i> was formed
1938	Maryland established the first state medical examiner office in 1938
1944	The term forensic pathology was not coined until 1944.

- 1953 RCWs Amended. See Law highlighted Section 9. Amended: Reports and records of autopsy and postmortems confidential.**
- 1956** The American Board of pathology recognized the medical subspecialty of forensic pathology.
- 1963 Washington State RCWs Amended. See Law highlighted. No amendment to Reports and records of autopsy and postmortems confidential.**

MEDICAL EXAMINERS

- 1966** The *National Association of Medical Examiners* was formed.
- 1966** The *American Board of Medicolegal Death Investigators* was formed. Medicolegal death investigation, legal medicine and forensic pathology evolved over centuries, only recently recognized by organized medicine as an independent branch of medicine. Modern forensic pathologists are performing better medicolegal death investigations than ever before and contributing to an ever-increasing scientific and medical literature.
- 1992 Whatcom County Started contracting with Dr. Gary Goldfogel.**
- 2005** IACME [Standards](#) were implemented
- 2006** The National Association of Medical Examiners (“NAME”) and standards was developed ([standards](#) updated when amended).

2021 CERTIFICATION OF ENROLLMENT

FINAL HOUSE BILL 1326

Chapter 127, Laws of 2021

67th Legislature 2021 Regular Session

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 25, 2021—Except for sections 4 and 6, which become effective January 1, 2025.

CORONERS AND MEDICAL EXAMINERS—VARIOUS PROVISIONS

2022- Present (new Medical Examiner)

- Adhere to [RCW 68.50.010](#)
- Adopted the International Association for Coroners and Medical Examiners Standards
- Require Medical Examiner investigators to investigate the scene of death instead of LE criminal investigators.
- Working with historical partners to ensure collaboration and clarity of roles and responsibilities. Ongoing discussions.
- Hired and trained Death Investigators in accordance with International Association for Coroners and Medical Examiners Standards
- Hired trained and experienced autopsy technicians.
- Updating outdated equipment.
- Developed policies and procedures in accordance with the International Association for Coroners and Medical Examiners including:
 - Changed the locks on the medical examiner building and morgue and only the medical examiner staff has access to the building and morgue.
 - BOOTS ON THE GROUND Procedure established that mandates medical examiner staff presence on all jurisdictional deaths where scene investigation is required by the medical examiner.
 - Policy and procedure established which mandates all body bags containing decedent's to be physically locked with a numbered lock while in transit to the medical examiner's office and remained sealed until the examination.
 - Policy and procedure established that requires all gunshot victim' hands are secured at the scene and receive X-Rays before examination.
 - Policy and procedure established that requires all infant (0-12 months of age) and children 1 year-18 years of age) decedents receive X-Rays before examination.
 - Procedure established mandated administrative investigative and pathology staff presence in the office Monday- Friday, on call investigators remain on call after normal business hours and over the weekend.

- Partnered with Health Department to provide as close to real time information as possible relating to the Opioid Crisis in Whatcom County.
- Implemented the utilization of the state's forensic Anthropologist and Odontologist for identification and further study.
- Partnered with Tissue and Organ Donation Programs
- Began working with DEA in response to Opioid Crisis in Whatcom County
- Began Utilizing Electronic tracking for all medical examiner cases.
 - Created electronic forms for Personal Property and Evidence transported to and from the medical examiner's office.
 - Allowed for Body Tracking of decedent's transported to and from the office; released to and returned by tissue and organ donation facilities for donation and the status of each case.
- Provide (ongoing) Weeklong Death Investigator Training annually, paid for by Medical Examiner
- Training workshops for agencies Medical Examiner works in association with to provide training about the medical examiner's roles and duties.
- Fall 2022 Implemented use of forensic specialists including cardiac pathology and neuropathology.
- March 2023 Applied for a grant to buy an X-Ray machine. (accreditation standard and cost savings long term)
- August 2023 overall remodel of the morgue and office commenced (moving toward accreditation)
- September 2023 grant to purchase X-Ray machine awarded.
- Discontinued contracted transport and began transporting jurisdiction cases (vehicle loaned by local funeral home)
- April 2024, placed order for X-Ray Machine (cost savings long term).
- Continuously work towards receiving and retaining accreditation and serving Whatcom County and its citizens with professionalism, integrity and dignity.