



## CLASS SPECIFICATION

Class Code: 2254  
Date Est: 05/1978  
Last Rev: 06/2020  
Last Title Chg: 09/2011  
FLSA: non-exempt  
Probation: 12 months

### MEDICOLEGAL DEATH INVESTIGATOR/TECHNOLOGIST

#### **DEFINITION**

Under general supervision, responds to calls and performs death scene investigations; assumes legal custody of remains; performs gross dissection, assisting pathologist with autopsies; maintains examination room, equipment, and supplies; and performs related work as required.

#### **EXPERIENCE AND TRAINING REQUIREMENTS**

Sixty (60) semester units from an accredited college or university which included courses in at least two of the following areas: anatomy, physiology, pathology and dissection, medical terminology, or a closely related field; AND one year of full-time experience as a technician in pathology, histology, surgery, or repeated exposure to catastrophic injury or death (e.g., paramedic, nursing, emergency room, forensic investigation); OR an equivalent combination of training and experience.

#### **LICENSE OR CERTIFICATE**

A valid driver's license is required at the time of appointment.

American Board of Medicolegal Death Investigation (ABMDI) Diplomate Registration or Certification is required within one year of time of appointment.

#### **DISTINGUISHING CHARACTERISTICS**

Incumbents are primarily responsible for investigating death scenes, identifying human and non-human remains, locating and notifying the next-of-kin; performing gross dissection under the direction of a pathologist and the documentation of autopsy findings, using x-rays and photographs; specimen collection; and chain of custody.

#### **SUPERVISION EXERCISED**

Exercises no supervision.

**EXAMPLES OF DUTIES** *(The following is used as a partial description and is not restrictive as to duties required.)*

Examine bodies and death scenes which includes taking photographs, examining bodies, recording observations, taking fingerprints, collecting/preserving biohazardous/infectious specimens, interviewing witnesses, and collecting/preserving evidence and personal effects in response to calls from hospitals, nursing homes, citizens, law enforcement agencies, or other sources, to assist in determining probable cause and manner of death and necessity for autopsy or further examination.

Independently conduct death investigations and perform autopsies under the general direction of a forensic pathologist for a wide variety of cases including, but not limited to, severe traumas, children and infants, multiple fatality incidents, decomposed bodies, skeletal remains, violent crimes, infectious and biohazardous exposures, etc.; this includes responding to and investigating multiple death scenes and conducting multiple autopsies during a single shift.

Assume legal custody of remains and arrange for transport to either a mortuary or the Medical Examiner's Office, as appropriate; escort transport of remains to the Medical Examiner's Office to maintain chain of custody on evidence, personal effects and remains.

Responsible for coordinating city, county, state, and federal law enforcement agencies, medical, nursing personnel, families, friends, witnesses, and regulatory agencies (i.e. Bureau of Mines, FAA etc.).

Analyze collected evidence and personal effects; examine and interpret medical records, interview family members, neighbors, medical personnel, witnesses, public agency staff and others who had contact with or knowledge of the deceased, to establish identity and history of the deceased.

Search for, locate, and notify next-of-kin or responsible party to communicate circumstances of death, legal, and other required procedures and to arrange for the subsequent examination and disposition of remains, as well as personal effects.

Write clear and accurate reports which thoroughly detail the circumstances of death, findings, and actions taken; this includes proper spelling and grammar, medical terminology, and accuracy of details, dates, and times.

Schedule autopsies and medical examinations; coordinate the attendance of requisite agencies.

Train physicians, nurses, medical students, paramedics and law enforcement personnel in different aspects of death scene investigation.

Aspirate blood, urine and vitreous samples in those instances where timeliness of samples is mandated by statute or chemical decomposition (e.g., DUI, diabetes).

Collect biohazardous/infectious specimens from death scenes and dead bodies.

Safely handle and collect/preserve dangerous substances such as chemicals, poisons, and drugs.

Organize daily autopsy schedules and documentation and notify proper agencies of time.

Inspect bodies, making external examinations of clothing and personal effects, noting findings; remove and inventory clothing and personal effects, preserving them for transfer to the forensic laboratory or return to the next-of-kin.

Visually examine bodies prior to autopsy, taking photographs and x-rays to make a permanent record for case files of traumas and other medical abnormalities; communicate findings to pathologist prior to and during autopsy.

Perform anatomical dissections of bodies during autopsy, including, but not limited to, severe traumas, children and infants, decomposed bodies, skeletal remains, violent crimes, and infectious and biohazardous exposures, using established medical protocols under the direction of a pathologist; measure and weigh organs as they are removed, noting any abnormalities discovered; replace organs in chest cavities after autopsy, suture and clean bodies in preparation for release to correct authorities.

Secure a variety of specimens from bodies, including tissue, hair, nail clippings, biohazardous/infectious swabs, bodily fluids, chemicals/poisons, vitreous, urine, and blood samples for further analysis or storage for future reference; write evidence record receipts for each sample taken, maintain accurate chain of custody.

Maintain examination areas in an orderly and sanitary condition, keeping equipment sharpened and disinfected; maintain an inventory of adequate supplies to ensure efficient operations.

Maintain case related data including property and attendance sheets, worksheets, photographs, x-rays, tissue blocks and slides, or other specimens for easy retrieval and reference.

Meet with families of deceased to explain complete death investigation findings, cause of death, funeral processes, and jurisdictional requirements.

May testify in court proceedings, citing involvement in a particular case, including actions performed and maintaining a chain of evidence custody.

## **JOB RELATED AND ESSENTIAL QUALIFICATIONS**

**Full Performance** *(These may be acquired on the job and are needed to perform the work assigned.)*

### **Knowledge of:**

Nevada Revised Statutes, Washoe County Code, and local ordinances as they relate to the jurisdictional authority of the Medical Examiner's Office.

Departmental policies and procedures.

Protocols for handling and preserving evidence.

Biohazard protection and cleaning procedures.

### **Ability to:**

Operate cameras, x-ray, and fluoroscope equipment.

Operate laser fingerprint and digital photography equipment.

File and retrieve case related data.

Operate a personal computer.

**Entry Level** *(Applicants will be screened for possession of these through written, oral, performance, or other evaluation methods.)*

### **Knowledge of:**

Human anatomy and physiology.

Pharmacology.

Biohazard precautions.

Postmortem changes and the variety of traumatic injuries in the human body.

Pathology and diagnostic techniques.

Radiology techniques.

Autopsy protocol.

Medical terminology.

Isolation and sterilization techniques.

Toxicology requirements/evidence collection procedures.

Biohazards, radiation hazards, and biochemical hazards.

Basic incident command and disaster management procedures.

**Ability to:**

Recognize aspects of human anatomy and physiology related to identification of human and non-human remains and cause of death.

Witness catastrophic death scenes and autopsies.

Accurately observe, record, recall, and report information.

Exercise sound judgment and make appropriate decisions under adverse circumstances.

Analyze information and situations and arrive at logical conclusions.

Interpret and apply regulations, policies and procedures at local, state and federal levels.

Exercise emotional control, especially under stressful situations.

Interact considerately with next-of-kin, witnesses, hospital personnel, and others involved in the death being investigated.

Document findings and write narrative reports that are free from grammatical errors and use appropriate terminology.

Use various surgical instruments.

Perform gross dissection.

Communicate verbally in a clear, concise manner.

Perform mathematical calculations, such as conversion from centimeters to inches, addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division.

Interpret and apply regulations, policies, and procedures.

Write reports and complete forms related to autopsy findings that are free from grammatical errors and use appropriate terminology..

Establish and maintain effective working relationships with those contacted in the course of work.

**SPECIAL REQUIREMENTS** *(Essential duties require the following physical skills and work environment.)*

Work is performed in an autopsy examination room, standard office, and various indoor and outdoor off-site locations on hard, slippery, or uneven surfaces, in variety of weather and climate conditions. Ability to stand for extended periods. Ability to independently lift and move bodies weighing over 100 lbs. Ability to use surgical instruments, x-ray equipment,, photographic equipment, and standard office equipment including telephones, copiers, computers and fax machines. Ability to tolerate exposure to dust, gases, fumes, solvents and chemicals, blood and air borne pathogens. Ability to sit, stand, walk, climb, crawl, bend, kneel, and crouch for extended periods of time to conduct death investigations and autopsies.

*This class specification is used for classification, recruitment and examination purposes. It is not to be considered a substitute for work performance standards.*