

### What do I do now?

- Contact a funeral home or crematory of your choice to make arrangements for burial, cremation, or other final disposition.
- Arrange for care of any dependents and pets.
- Secure residence and safeguard any valuables.
- Cancel any scheduled appointments of the deceased.
- If he/she was employed, notify their employer.
- Advise creditors (banks) of the death.

### **Locate the following Documents:**

- Birth Certificate
- Social Security Card
- Will, Power of Attorney or other directives
- Marriage License
- Military discharge papers (DD-214)
- Copy of funeral prearrangements
- Life insurance policies

### **If your loved one was a Veteran:**

- Entered service date and place
- Service number
- Date/place separated from service
- Grade, Rank, or Ranking
- Organization and Branch of Service

### Information for the Funeral Home

- Deceased's First, Middle, Last name
- Deceased's Maiden Name
- Deceased's Home Address
- Deceased's Social Security Number
- Deceased's Date of Birth
- Race/Ethnicity
- Marital Status
- Spouse's First and Last Name
- Deceased's highest level of education
- Deceased's Occupation
- Deceased's Place of Birth (city/state)
- Father's Name, Birth City and State
- Mother's Name, Birth City, State

### Skagit County Agencies

- Skagit Co. Sheriff 360-416-1911
- Mount Vernon PD 360-336-6271
- Anacortes PD 360-293-4684
- Burlington PD 360-755-0921
- Sedro-Woolley PD 360-855-0111
- WA State Patrol 360-757-1175
- Skagit Co. Public Health 360-416-1500  
(Issues certified Death Certificates)
- Dept. of Veteran Affairs 1-800-827-1000
- Mount Vernon VA 360-588-5156
- Social Security 1-800-772-1213

### Funeral Homes in Skagit County

#### **Anacortes**

- Evans 360-293-3311

#### **Mount Vernon**

- Hawthorne 360-424-1154
- Alpha Omega 360-424-3531
- Kern 360-336-2153

#### **Sedro-Woolley**

- Lemley 360-855-1288

### **Alternate Funeral Agencies-Body Donation**

- Lake Wa. Tech Funeral Service Program  
425-739-8306
- BioGift 866-670-1799

The funeral home can assist you with obtaining certified copies of the death certificate, arranging transportation for your loved one if they will be taken out of state, and helping you navigate available insurance claims and veterans' benefits.

**NOTE:** Skagit County does not have an indigent assistance program to help cover funeral or cremation expenses. If cost is a concern, your chosen funeral home may offer payment plans or help you explore options that best fit your financial situation.

## SKAGIT COUNTY CORONER'S OFFICE

### SURVIVORS GUIDE



**Investigator:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Case#:** \_\_\_\_\_

1700 Continental Place  
Mount Vernon, WA 98273

Office Hours: 8am-6pm daily  
24-hour Office Phone: (360) 416-1996  
Fax: (360) 848-1173  
Email: [coroner@skagitcountywa.gov](mailto:coroner@skagitcountywa.gov)

On behalf of the Skagit County Coroner's Office, we extend our deepest sympathies to you and your family for the loss of your loved one. We hope this brochure provides guidance and support during this difficult time by answering common questions about the Coroner's Office and explaining our role in the death investigation process.

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

WA Law requires the Coroner to investigate certain types of deaths and determine the cause and manner of death. If the Coroner's Office is investigating the death, it is likely because the death meets one or more of the following criteria:

1. The death was unattended meaning the deceased was not under medical supervision at the time of death.
2. The death is of a sudden, suspicious, or unnatural nature.

### **How does the Coroner obtain information for the investigation?**

The Coroner's office uses a variety of methods to gather information needed to complete a thorough and accurate investigation. These may include a forensic autopsy, external examination, toxicology testing, review of medical records, and interviews with family members, friends, witnesses, and others who may have relevant information. Our office will remain in contact throughout the investigation and share information as it becomes available and as permitted by law.

### **Where will my loved one be taken?**

Your loved one will be transported to the Skagit County Coroner's Office:  
**1700 Continental Place  
Mount Vernon, WA 98273**

### **Do I need to identify my loved one?**

No. In most cases identification is obtained by investigators at the location of death. In some cases, positive identification may require additional methods such as fingerprints, dental records, X-ray comparison, medical implant/device, or DNA.

### **Is viewing allowed at the Coroner's Office?**

Viewing is not available at the Coroner's Office. If you would like to arrange a viewing, your chosen funeral home will be able to assist you after the Coroner's examination has been completed and your loved one has been released into their care.

**NOTE:** the surgical procedures used to perform an autopsy will not interfere with having a viewing.

### **Is an autopsy always performed?**

No. In many cases, the cause and manner of death can be determined through a review of medical records, external examination, and/or toxicology testing. An autopsy may be performed when additional information is needed to determine or verify the cause and manner of death as well as to collect evidence.

If you have questions, concerns, or objections regarding an autopsy, please contact our office. We will make every effort to address your concerns and provide information about the process.

### **What if I want an autopsy performed?**

If the Coroner's Office declines to perform an autopsy, the family has the right to have a private autopsy done at their own expense.

### **When will my loved one be released to a funeral home?**

Your loved one will be available for release to a funeral home after the coroner's examination has been completed, which may include an autopsy. In most cases, release occurs within 5 days of the death. In cases where additional investigation is required (such as identification confirmation), your loved one may need to remain in our care for a longer period of time.

### **How do I get the personal items that were with my loved one when they died?**

All personal items are securely kept at the Coroner's Office until they are authorized to be released. Once all procedures have been completed and your loved one is ready for release to the funeral home, personal belongings will typically be sent with them. In some cases, personal items may need to be retained as evidence after the release has occurred. If this occurs, our office can answer any questions about this process.

### **Do I have to pay for any Coroner Services?**

No. The Coroner's Office is funded by tax dollars. All standard services provided by the Coroner's Office are offered at no cost to the family.

### **Will I be told the cause and manner of death of my loved one?**

Yes. If a forensic autopsy or toxicology testing is required, our office will keep the legal next of kin informed throughout the investigation and provide final findings when available. Because some test results take longer than the initial examination, the cause and manner of death may be listed as "Pending" on the death certificate until the investigation is complete. This process typically takes 3-4 months.

### **Can I use a 'Pending' Death Certificate?**

The death investigation may continue after the coroner's office has completed the initial examination and your loved one has been released to the funeral home. Listing the cause and manner of death as "Pending" on the death certificate allows you to proceed with funeral arrangements and begin other necessary legal or administrative processes while the investigation is ongoing.

### **Can I get a copy of the autopsy report?**

All Coroner records are confidential and not public record. Family members may request a copy of our reports by submitting a records request form with photo ID.

Once the investigation is complete, including any toxicology, specialized testing, and final autopsy reports, our office will notify the family when the case has been finalized and closed and can release reports at that time. This process typically takes 3-4 months.

**Preliminary reports are not available.**

### **How do I obtain a death certificate?**

There are 2 ways to obtain a death certificate:

- Directly through the funeral home.
- Vital Records Office after the death certificate has been filed by the funeral home (360) 416-1500.