

# DEATH IN THE FIELD

## PURPOSE

To provide guidelines for pre-hospital care personnel to follow when at the scene of deceased patient who do not have existing Do Not Resuscitate/POLST orders.

## RESPONSIBILITY

All personnel are responsible for the information set forth in the following procedures.

## PROCEDURES

- ❑ EMRs and EMTs may declare "death in the field" under the following circumstances:
  - Major injuries incompatible with life (e.g., Decapitation, Incineration)
  - Avulsion of vital body organs
  - Decomposition of body
  - Presence of rigor mortis and/or lividity
  - Patients triaged into black category during MCI situations
- ❑ Advanced EMTs, Intermediates and Paramedics, in addition to the above, may declare a patient dead under the following circumstances:
  - Asystole in three leads, unresponsive to ACLS
  - Traumatic full arrest
- ❑ When, it is determined beyond any doubt that the patient is deceased, EMS personnel shall request the law enforcement agency having jurisdiction respond a 'deputy ME'.
  - Deaths requiring an investigation per ORS 146.090:
    - Apparently homicidal, suicidal, or occurring under suspicious or unknown circumstances;
    - Resulting from the unlawful use of controlled substances or the use or abuse of chemicals or toxic agents;
    - Occurring while incarcerated in any jail, correction facility, or in police custody;
    - Apparently accidental or following an injury;
    - By disease, injury, or toxic agent during or arising from employment;
    - While not under the care of a physician during the period immediately (within two weeks) previous to death;
    - Related to disease which might constitute a threat to the public health; or
    - In which a human body apparently has been disposed of in an offensive manner.
- ❑ Emergency personnel should take care not to disturb the body and any objects that may be surrounding the body. If the body or objects around the body must be moved:
  - Latex-free gloves must be worn;
  - A written notice should be made of its original location/position; and
  - Law enforcement officer should be advised of its original location/position.
- ❑ In the event of a delay by the investigating law enforcement agency, at least one individual must remain with the body
  - The individual remaining on scene shall make available to the investigating law enforcement agency the names and position titles of all personnel initially on scene.
- ❑ The investigating law enforcement officer or medical examiner will arrange for the removal of the body.
- ❑ Any invasive medical equipment such as IVs, ET tubes, needle thoracotomy, cricothyrotomy, etc., shall not be removed without prior approval from the ME. It is acceptable to occlude IV tubing to prevent fluid leakage.