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**NEVADA COUNTY  
SHERIFF'S OFFICE**



**CORONER'S DIRECTIVE**

**25**

**Effective Date ~~05/30/99~~  
2/6/18**

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**SUBJECT**

**PHOTOGRAPHY**

**POLICY**

It is the policy of the sheriff-coroner to photograph certain types of coroner cases for preservation of the crime scene at a later date. It is also important to take photographs at the time of autopsy on certain cases

**PURPOSE**

To provide the deputy coroner with information relative to the proper photographs to be taken in conjunction with specific types of deaths

**CODE REFERENCE**

**California Code of Civil Procedure §129**

**CASE LAW**

**DEFINITIONS**

**PROCEDURE**

- A. Digital photos shall be uploaded to the Multimedia Summary section of the coroner's report in the report management system.
- B. Investigative photography provides an excellent means of preserving indefinitely the evidence found at the scene of death relative to location, and appearance at the time the body was found. Photographs are taken solely for the use of the sheriff's office. Photographs of a deceased body or any portion of the body of a deceased person are not releasable to anyone other than the district attorney for use in a criminal action or proceeding, which relates to the death of that person. A court order is required for release for any other reason, to any individual (CCP §129).
- C. Photography Guidelines

Investigative photography requirements vary with the different types of

investigations conducted and in many instances (i.e., natural deaths in the hospital, et cetera), photography is not needed. The following list of minimum photography requirements is to be use as a guideline. The experienced investigator appreciates the significance of the saying “one picture is worth a thousand words”.

### 1. Unidentified Remains – John/Jane Doe Cases.

In cases where the identity of the deceased is not known or is in doubt or question, photography is a must. Full-body photographs (both clothed and unclothed), close-up photographs of any scars, marks, and tattoos, together with full-face and left- and right-profile views of the face, shall be taken along with any other unusual features, identifying marks, or deformities.

### 2. Homicide Cases

- a. Keep in mind that the investigations division will handle the homicide investigation. The deputy coroner will only handle the coroner’s case.
- b. At scene: Photograph the entire scene from 360 degrees starting from the north. Photograph the relative positions of any objects. Photograph any injuries, weapons, blood spatter patterns, marks, and any other significant items or conditions that can or do have a bearing on the death.

### 3. Autopsy

- a. Identify photographs with nameplate indicating date and place of autopsy, time, and autopsy surgeon (at least two photographs).
- b. Photograph full body front and back, side views, clothed and unclothed.
- c. Photograph full face/right- and left-profile views.
- d. Any observable trauma and identifying scars and marks will be photographed separately with and without scale rulers in the photograph, and in such a manner as to be able to relate the item depicted in the photo to its location on the body. Macro photographs shall be taken of trauma, scars, and marks, et, cetera as needed.
- e. Subcutaneous evidence of injury, such as the reflected scalp, reflected chest area with breastplate present and removed, damaged organs or

organ systems, bullet/knife/projective tracks are to be recorded with and without probes to indicate amount of injury and direction into, through, and out of tissues.

- f. Any other photographs taken will depend on the circumstances: Trauma present, pathologist's requests, et cetera. Always ask the pathologist if he/she wants photographs of a questionable area/organ.

#### 4. Accidents

##### a. At Scene:

- (1) If at all possible, photograph the body and its relative position within the accident/death scene to include pieces of equipment, vehicles, tools, weapons, buildings, roads, and fixed objects together with any indicators of how or why the incident occurred (i.e., burned wire from electrical short circuits, tire skid marks, blood spatters, broken or damaged equipment and vehicles, et cetera).
- (2) Record the name of the decedent, if known, at the beginning of the roll for easier identification of what might be otherwise indiscernible.
- (3) Use a scale, if it is appropriate, as it is often vital to understanding the scene depicted.
- (4) Photograph the scene from different angles and distances.

##### b. At Autopsy

In addition to the photographs listed above, pay particular attention to patterned injury, such as tire marks, tool marks, injuries consistent with pedestrian vs. auto, driver injuries consistent with a collision (head, chest, wrist, seat belt injury patterns).

#### 5. Suicide

In addition to photos listed in Paragraph "4", photograph any notes or visual indicators of incident. The suicide death scene is especially important in demonstrating both the level of intent and lethality potential of the method employed by the deceased. Also, in many instances, it is vital to indicate the ability of the deceased to perform the act alone.

6. As with suicide, the scene photography is vitally important in evaluating the decedent's intent, any safety devices that failed, and the particular aversion methods used

7. Drug/Alcohol Overdose Poisoning

Photographs should depict, if possible, any instruments used in administering of the drug/poison, empty containers or vials, tracks, et cetera. Photograph also the condition, location, and position of the body.

8. Fire Scenes

Ensure that the location of the deceased is indicated and bear in mind that special lighting may be required in these cases.

9. SUIDS Cases

Especially vital is photography depicting the scene (often the crib or bassinet), rigor mortis patterns, cleanliness of the residence overall, and clothing of the deceased. Photograph postmortem lividity/blanching patterns.

10. Questionable/Unexplained Deaths

Photography in equivocal deaths has been known to be vital in finally determining the cause/mode of death. Approach these as a homicide and photograph accordingly.