



LESSON PLAN

SUBJECT: Death Investigations

LENGTH: 1 hour

PREPARED BY: Steven Kai

DATE PREPARED: June 7, 2019

APPROVED BY:

DATE APPROVED: 09/03/19

I. Performance Objectives/Job-Related Objectives:

The purpose of this training is to provide officers with the knowledge to properly handle death investigations.

II. Type of Instruction:

The instructor will review the procedures for preliminary investigation from the Criminal Investigation Policy 07-C.I.-005, and the Memoranda of Agreement – LAPD and LASD Policy 05-O.A.-004. In addition, officers will watch select POST Telecourse segments regarding the role of the coroner, investigation of natural deaths, suicide deaths, and preliminary investigation of suspicious deaths.

III. Course Outline:

A. Department Policy Review

1. Criminal Investigation 07-C.I.-005

Preliminary Investigation Procedures - Patrol officers are responsible for conducting careful, thorough, and accurate preliminary death investigations and are expected to continue with the investigation and follow-up as needed.

Important considerations:

- a. Immediately notify the Chief of Police and the Captain of Patrol Operations.
- b. Contain the scene until all investigative possibilities have been addressed and to ensure that evidence is not lost or contaminated.
- c. Determine scene safety including the presence of weapons and other hazardous conditions.
- d. Determine whether a criminal offense has been committed or attempted based on the physical evidence and/or other information provided.
- e. Observe and accurately document the scene conditions including all events, unusual conditions, and statements. This may include taking photographs and drawing diagrams.
- f. Identify potential witnesses and vehicles involved.
- g. Check the location for the presence of security cameras and the existence of video footage of the incident.
- h. Make proper notifications to a detective, if required.

2. Memoranda of Agreement – LAPD and LASD 05-O.A.-004

LAPD shall maintain preliminary and follow-up investigative responsibility for death investigations where the evidence suggests a possible homicide or the cause of death is “undetermined,” and the incident occurred on properties owned, operated, leased, controlled, or administered by the California State University, or by trustees or the state on behalf of the California State University and that occur within the city of Los Angeles.

B. POST Telecourse Segments

1. Coroners: Roles and Responsibilities

a. Introduction (10 min.)

Key points:

- Coroner’s authority is derived from California Government Code Sections 27491, 27492, 27471.
- Coroner’s investigation is independent of any law enforcement investigation.
- Timely notification to coroner is critical when the death is deemed a coroner’s case.

b. Investigating Natural Deaths (17 min.)

Key points:

- Obtain preliminary statements from person who found the body.
- Obtain victim's information including name, age, date/time found, doctor's name, medication, and medical history.
- Assess the scene for anything unusual or suspicious. Note any unexplained trauma to the body.
- Ask questions to eliminate or establish foul play.
- Observe the emotions, demeanor, and actions of persons present.
- Contain the scene and do not unnecessarily disturb the body or the scene.

c. Investigating Suicide Deaths (16 min.)

Key points:

- Look for the presence of medications (particularly for depression).
- Ask persons present if the victim has a history of attempted suicide, depression, or experienced a significant triggering event.
- Look for signs of illicit drug use.
- Look for the presence of a suicide note. (The victim's cell phone may also contain pertinent information).
- Attempt to determine the method of death. If a firearm was used, note its location/proximity to the body and the location of the entry/exit wound.
- Note any trauma to the body and the pooling of blood.

2. Preliminary Investigation

a. Suspicious Death Telecourse Scenario (7 min.)

Key points:

- Obtain paramedic information.
- Express condolences to the family of the victim.
- Observe the scene to corroborate statements or establish criminal activity. Note anything unusual or out of place that would be potential evidence of a crime.
- When obtaining information from persons present, Miranda is not necessary unless it becomes a custodial interview.
- Interview neighbors and ask about any unusual events occurring prior to or after the death.
- A review of the 9-1-1 recording may be useful to determine the emotional state of the caller reporting the death.

V. Closing

A. Questions & Comments

Coroners: Roles and Responsibilities

**Telecourse DVD
July 2009**

Multimedia I.D. Number: **209**
CPT Hours: **2**
DVD Shipping Date: **07/31/09**

This telecourse is designed to raise awareness among law enforcement personnel of the key role of the coroner in death investigations and the many benefits of timely contact to the coroner's office.

The program features scenarios to demonstrate some of the key points relevant to the types of deaths law enforcement may encounter. In-depth interviews with coroners, medical examiners, and law enforcement personnel from throughout the state cover different types of death investigations and the significant benefits of teamwork and good communication.

The DVD program offers three viewing options:

1. Play Telecourse in its entirety (105 min.)
2. Select among nine Telecourse segments:
 - Introduction (10 min.)
 - Investigating Natural Deaths (17 min.)
 - Investigating Suicide Deaths (16 min.)
 - Investigating Homicides (16 min.)
 - Investigating Vehicular Deaths (11 min.)
 - The Forensic Autopsy (15 min.)
 - Investigating Elder Deaths (4 min.)
 - Investigating Child Deaths (8 min.)
 - Final Thoughts (5 min.)
3. Select among five Telecourse interactions (scenarios only):
 - Natural Death Call (3 min.)
 - Coroner's Response to Natural Death (5 min.)
 - Suicide Call With Coroner (3 min.)
 - Homicide Call With Coroner (3 min.)
 - Vehicular Death With Coroner (2 min.)

Preliminary Investigation

105 Minutes - Telecourse DVD (New)
December 2004

For many law enforcement agencies, the first responder to a crime scene may also become the investigating officer. The officer's preliminary investigation will determine whether or not the case is going to be solved, so he/she must gather all information, locate and preserve the evidence, and locate and interview all witnesses in order to do the most thorough investigation possible.

The DVD program offers three viewing options:

1. Play Telecourse in its entirety (115 min.)

2. Select among ten Telecourse segments:

- Introduction (3 min.)
- Initial Considerations (9 min.)
- Completing the Call (15 min.)
- Burglary Scenario (11 min.)
- Stolen Car Scenario (10 min.)
- Hate Crime Scenario (14 min.)
- School Shooting Scenario (19 min.)
- Sexual Assault Scenario (11 min.)
- Suspicious Death Scenario (7 min.)
- Wrap Up (2 min.)

3. Select among four Telecourse interactions:

- Sexual Assault Scenario (4 min.)
- School Shooting Scenario (2 min.)
- Burglary Scenario (3 min.)
- Hate Crime Scenario (3 min.)

POST Course Control Number:

Telecourse Module Number:

Reference Guide

04-12b

NA

* Specific to DVD only. The first four digits of the Course Control Number (xxxx) is the preassigned Telecourse Presenter Number specific to your agency; the tenth and eleventh digits (xx) are the fiscal year in which your agency presents this program. See website for detailed instructions.