



CHATHAM COUNTY EMERGENCY OPERATIONS PLAN

**ESF ANNEX 8
APPENDIX 8-3
TAB B**

**OPERATIONS PROTOCOLS
AND TOOLS – RECEPTION
AND REGISTRATION**

NOVEMBER 2013



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B-1 OPERATIONS OVERVIEW

The Finance/Admin Documentation Section will complete the following operations overview once every operational period and send to the EOC.

Victim Information Update

Missing Person Contact Center Update

	Number in last operational period	Number to date
Number of calls to the Missing Person Contact Center		
Number of calls answered with an operator		
Number of calls that do not reach an operator		
	Last operational period	Overall average
Average length answered calls		
Types of Calls _____		

Unaccounted for Persons Group Update

	Number in last operational period	Number to date
Number of unaccounted for persons reports received		
Number of positive identifications of injured or sheltered		
Number of unaccounted for persons cases still open		
Number of unaccounted for persons cases transferred to the Coroner's Office		

Antemortem Data and Notification and Referral Group Updates

	Number in last operational period	Number to date
Number of family interviews		
Number of families not visiting the FAC		



contacted		
Number of dental records, medical records that have been requested/received		
Number of positive ID's made by Coroners Office		
Number of families to which remains have been released		

Family Briefings

	Number in last operational period	Number to date
Number of family briefings held		
Number of people who attended the briefings		

Support Services Update

	Number in last operational period	Number to date
Number of children in childcare		
Number of families using childcare		
Number of translation/interpretation requests		

	Age Range	Number
Children in childcare		

Languages spoken by FAC families _____

List types of referral services made in the last operational period _____

Faith Communities represented by the FAC families _____



Questions/Comments: Document below any representative feedback from families that illustrates the perspective of families, key concerns, etc.



B-2 FAMILY REGISTRATION/CHECK-IN PROTOCOLS

1. As families enter the facility have greeters present to show them to the reception area.
2. Families will check-in to the facility.
 - a. All family members must sign-in upon arrival.
 - b. Family members are required to produce government issued photo identification upon entry to ensure the identity of all visitors. In the event that a family member does not have a government issued identification (minor children, undocumented persons, identification unavailable, etc.) reception staff, with the assistance of Law Enforcement, should take reasonable steps to ensure the identity of the individual.
 - c. Law Enforcement should be on hand to verify all identification and issue each person a badge. Badges should have a unique feature (e.g. color coding) and have a photo.
3. If this is the family member's first visit to the FAC they must complete a Family/Friend Registration Form. If someone arrives at the FAC and is not looking for a family member notify security immediately.
4. Provide all family members with a Family Resource Packet.
5. Family Hosts should provide family member with a brief overview of the services provided at the FAC, a tour of the facility (if possible) and assist them with any immediate needs.
6. Translators/Interpreters should be on hand to provide assistance with the registration process if necessary.
7. Behavioral Health providers should be on hand at all times to provide assistance to families.
8. Security Personnel should be available for assistance if necessary.
9. All family members must return their badge upon leaving the FAC.

Forms to be completed:

1. Family/Friend Daily Sign-in Sheet
2. Family/Friend Registration Form



B-3 FAMILY/FRIEND DAILY SIGN-IN SHEET

Use this form if a digital credentialing/ badging system is not available

Victim Name

Last Name _____ First Name _____ MI _____

Date	Time of Arrival	Family Member Name (please print)	Signature	Time of Departure



B-4 FAMILY/FRIEND REGISTRATION FORM

Use this form if no electronic/database registration system is available

Unaccounted for Person Information

Last Name _____ First Name _____ MI _____

For Multiple Unaccounted for Persons of the Same Family, Use Additional Forms and Cross Reference with Unaccounted for Persons Name at Bottom of this Page

1. Presenting Family Member/Friend Name

Last Name _____ First Name _____ MI _____

SS# (optional) _____ Relationship to Victim _____

Permanent Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Home Phone _____ Cell Phone _____

Photo Identification Verification (type/#!/State/County) _____

Medications/Medical Needs? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If Yes, Indicate Medication Needs _____

Physician's Name _____ Physician's Phone # _____

Next of Kin to Unaccounted for Person? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If No, Name of Next of Kin _____

Notes _____



2. Presenting Family Member/Friend Name

Last Name _____ First Name _____ MI _____

SS# (optional) _____ Relationship to Unaccounted for Person _____

Permanent Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Home Phone _____ Cell Phone _____

Photo Identification Verification (type/#/State/County) _____

Medications/Medical Needs? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Unaccounted for Person's Name _____ It Yes, Indicate Medication
Needs _____

Physician's Name _____ Physician's Phone # _____

Notes _____

3. Presenting Family Member/Friend Name

Last Name _____ First Name _____ MI _____

SS# (optional) _____ Relationship to Unaccounted for Person _____

Permanent Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Home Phone _____ Cell Phone _____

Photo Identification Verification (type/#/State/County) _____

Medications/Medical Needs? ☐ Yes ☐ No

It Yes, Indicate Medication Needs _____

Physician's Name _____ Physician's Phone # _____

Notes _____



4. Presenting Family Member/Friend Name

Last Name _____ First Name _____ MI _____

SS# (optional) _____ Relationship to Unaccounted for Person _____

Permanent Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Home Phone _____ Cell Phone _____

Photo Identification Verification (type/#/State/County) _____

Medications/Medical Needs? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If Yes, Indicate Medication Needs _____

Physician's Name _____ Physician's Phone # _____

Unaccounted for Person's Name _____ Notes _____

5. Presenting Family Member/Friend Name

Last Name _____ First Name _____ MI _____

SS# (optional) _____ Relationship to Unaccounted for Person _____

Permanent Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Home Phone _____ Cell Phone _____

Photo Identification Verification (type/#/State/County) _____

Medications/Medical Needs? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If Yes, Indicate Medication Needs _____

Physician's Name _____ Physician's Phone # _____

Notes _____



Next of Kin Information

Has Next of Kin arrived at the Family Assistance Center? ☐ Yes ☐ No

NOK Last Name _____ First Name _____

SS# (optional) _____ Relationship to Unaccounted for Person _____

Current Address _____

City _____ County _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone numbers _____

Medications/Medical Needs? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If Yes, Indicate Medication Needs _____

Physician's Name _____ Physician's Phone # _____

Unaccounted for Person's Name _____

Notes _____

Source

Information regarding Next of Kin provided by: _____

Relationship to Next of Kin: _____



B-5 STAFF DAILY SIGN-IN SHEET

Use this form if a digital credentialing/ badging system is not available

Name: _____ Job Title _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Home Phone _____ Cell Phone _____

ID Badge # _____

Date	Time of Arrival	Time of Departure	Area Assigned	Signature



B-6 STAFF CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT

As a staff member at the Family Assistance Center, I understand that I may come into possession of confidential client information, even though I may not be directly involved in providing client services. Client information may be in the form of files, paperwork, reports, records, documents, electronic data or oral communications. Access to client information is limited to authorized persons per Public Health policy, and state and federal law. My signature on this agreement indicates that I understand and agree to the following:

1. Any information I obtain on clients of the Family Assistance Center will be kept strictly confidential. This includes the knowledge of their visits to this facility and financial as well as clinical data.
2. Unless directed by my supervisor, I will not disclose any client information to any person whatsoever or permit any person whatsoever to examine or make copies of any client reports or other documents prepared by me, coming into my possession, or under my control, or use client information other than as necessary in the course of my business with the Family Assistance Center.
3. I will not remove client information or records from the Family Assistance Center
4. When client information must be discussed with other healthcare practitioners in the course of my assignment, I will use discretion to ensure that such conversations cannot be overheard by others who are not involved in the client's case.
5. I will use only that information which is minimally necessary to conduct my assignment.
6. I will maintain and safeguard the security of all personally identifiable health information obtained at the Family Assistance Center for which I am responsible.

By signing this, I acknowledge I have had the opportunity to ask questions and receive clarification on the above.

Date Signed

Signature of Staff Member

Printed Name of Staff Member

Date Signed

Signature of Family Assistance Center Supervisor

Printed name of Family Assistance Center
Supervisor

Phone Number

Email Address (optional)



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B-7 FAMILY RESOURCE PACKETT

FAMILY RESOURCE PACKET

****When utilizing a Family Resource Packet, please use official template in the FAC files.***

This will print with the page numbers of the Tab.

Suggestions for Printing

- Should be translated into multiple languages
- Could be posted on posters in the FAC



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Family Letter

Chatham Emergency Management Agency
Phone: 912-201-4500 TTY Relay: XXX
www.chathamemergency.org

Dear Families,



Important Information for Families

Welcome to the Family Assistance Center, a safe place for families of unaccounted for or deceased individuals to gather. Please be respectful of other families visiting the Family Assistance Center at all times. If at any time you have any questions, concerns, or requests do not hesitate to approach any staff member.

How do I Use the Family Resource Packet?

The Family Resource Packet is meant to provide you with information and resources to assist you in your time at the Family Assistance Center. At the end of the packet are several blank pages; throughout your time at the Family Assistance Center it might be helpful for you to take notes or write down any questions you may have. Because you may experience many distractions and emotions, these notes can be helpful reminders later on. If you have any questions about the information in this packet or anything at the Family Assistance Center do not hesitate to approach any staff member.

Who Can Come to the Family Assistance Center?

Any member of the unaccounted for or deceased person's "family" may attend the Family Assistance Center. "Family" may include any individual (family, friend, partner, distant relative) that is considered to be a part of the unaccounted for person's family, even if there is not a legal familiar relationship. This may include people other family members characterize as family.

Family Members Visiting the Family Assistance Center

All family members visiting the Family Assistance Center need to bring photo identification if possible. Upon entering the facility all family members will receive a unique badge. If a family representative wishes to prohibit the entry of specific family/friend, please inform the security team of your wishes. If you have any questions or concerns please feel free to speak to any registration staff member.

Family Interviews and Family Liaison Teams [Remove reference to liaison teams if not used]

Once your family feels comfortable answering questions please make an appointment with the Family Interview Scheduler who will schedule an interview appointment. Once you receive your family interview appointment your family will be assigned to a family liaison team. The family liaison teams are created to provide you with a core group of people that will always be available to answer any question or address any concerns. There are no differences between the teams or the staff members assigned each team. Please do not hesitate to approach any member of your or other teams if you have any questions.



Interpretation Services

If at any time you wish to have an interpreter present do not hesitate to ask any staff member. They will ensure you receive any language services you need.

Unaccounted for Family Members

If you cannot find your family member, he or she is considered unaccounted for. It is possible that they have been taken to a healthcare facility or shelter. Staff from the Family Assistance Center will work with you to gather information about the whereabouts of your unaccounted for family member. Families are encouraged to continue to search for their family members through all available channels. You should continue checking with their friends, school, work, neighbors, relatives, or anyone else who may know their whereabouts.

Identifying and Recovering Your Family Member

If it is determined that your family member is deceased and their body is currently in the custody of the Chatham County Coroner's Office, it's important to understand that viewing is not possible until they have been taken to a private funeral home. Additional information will be provided by a representative of the Coroner's Office during the Family Briefing.

Should You Need a Funeral Home

The choice of a funeral home is entirely up to your family. You are welcome to contact the funeral home of your choice, whether it is local or out of state. If you chose to work with a funeral home out of state it is very common for funeral homes to contract with a local funeral home to deliver remains. If you have any questions or concerns about these arrangements (referred to as 'disposition') please inform your Family Liaison Team or speak to a Decedent Affairs staff member

Talking with the Media

There will be no media allowed within the Family Assistance Center, but you may be approached by the media outside of the Family Assistance Center. You are under no obligation to speak to the media but you may speak to them if you choose to; however media is never allowed within the FAC. If you do not wish to speak to the media, remain silent or state that you have no comment. If you are being harassed by members of the media please inform a member of the Family Assistance Center staff or security team immediately. If you become aware of the presence of media inside the facility, immediately notify a security staff member.



Services Provided at the Family Assistance Center

[Update last minute with any services provided, hours, or any further information]

☐ **Childcare Services**

Childcare services will be offered to all families at the Family Assistance Center. All childcare areas will be run by trained staff.

☐ **Computer/Phone Bank**

A computer and phone bank area is available to families to aid in communications. If you need assistance with using a computer or phone any member of the communications team would be happy to help.

☐ **Family Briefings**

Family Briefings will be held twice a day by the Coroner or their designee. All families are encouraged to attend the family briefings to receive the most up to date information regarding the recovery and identification process.

☐ **Food Services**

Meals will be provided three times a day and a variety of healthy snacks will be provided throughout the day. Please communicate to a staff member any specific dietary restrictions or preferences. We will try to accommodate all requirements and preferences.

☐ **Meditation/Spiritual Care Area**

The meditation/spiritual care area is a quiet place for meditation or spiritual worship. Please ask a spiritual care provider if you need any assistance facilitating a gathering.

☐ **Memorial Area**

A memorial area will be provided for families. Please ask any staff member if you have questions relating to the memorial area.

☐ **Mental Health Services**

Licensed Mental Health providers will be available to all families at the Family Assistance Center. If you would like to speak to a mental health provider or need a referral to outside resources any mental health provider would be happy to help you.

☐ **Quiet Gathering Areas**

Quiet gathering areas are available for families if they wish to have a private space. Please ask any staff member to coordinate a private gathering space.



☐ Spiritual Care Services

Trained spiritual care providers will be available to all families at the Family Assistance Center. If you would like to speak to a spiritual care provider any spiritual care provider would be happy to help you.

☐ Secondary Services (below are examples of possible services)

- ☐ Crime Victims Assistance
- ☐ Financial Assistance
- ☐ Foreign Nationals
- ☐ Housing Assistance
- ☐ Insurance Advocacy
- ☐ Laundry Services
- ☐ Legal Assistance
- ☐ Provision of Medications
- ☐ Public Benefits
- ☐ Relocation Assistance
- ☐ Transportation
- ☐ Veterans Affairs
- ☐ Translation/Interpretation Services

☐ Television Room

A television room is provided for families who wish to watch the news. Please be considerate of other families who may not wish to hear about the news, please refrain from discussing television coverage outside of the television room.



Map of Family Assistance Center

[Insert once FAC is established]



Web Resources for Finding Your Family Member

Families are encouraged to continue to search for their family members through all available channels. You should continue checking with the unaccounted for person's friends, school, work, neighbors, relatives, or anyone else who may know their whereabouts.

You should also search web based resource to locate your family member. Below are a few examples of web based resources that could be useful. You are encouraged to post and search for information on any or all of these locators to aid in finding your family member. If you have any questions or need assistance with this process please do not hesitate to ask any Family Assistance Center staff member.

Social Networking Sites

- Following an incident, survivors may communicate their status with their family and friends through social networking pages or applications. Be sure to check with all social networking sites that your family member may communicate through.

Person Finder by Google

- Following a disaster the Google Crisis Response team assesses the severity and scope of a disaster to determine if they will activate its 'person finder,' which enables people to either 'look for someone' or 'provide information about someone.' This tool has been used in many of the recent disasters across the world. For more information, visit www.google.com/crisisresponse.

National Emergency Family Registry and Locator System (NEFRLS)

- NEFRLS is a web-based system which, when activated, collects information from individuals for the purpose of reuniting family and household members that have been displaced as a result of a Presidentially-declared disaster or emergency. NEFRLS is hosted by Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), which may be activated following a disaster declaration and operates on a 24/7 basis.
- Displaced individuals, including medical patients, can register in one of two ways during a disaster. The first is via the NEFRLS 800 number by which an operator at the Texas National Processing Center will take their information over the phone. The second option is via the internet through www.FEMA.gov or directly at <https://asd.fema.gov/inter/nefrls/home.htm>. Registrants can provide current contact information, list travel companions, and create a personal message. Registrants can designate up to 7 individuals to accept a Privacy Act Statement and complete an identity verification process.
- Individuals registering as or searching for a displaced child under the age of 21 will be directed to the National Emergency Child Locator Center (NECLC)



National Emergency Child Locator Center (NECLC)

- Following a Presidentially declared disaster the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children (NCMEC), with support from FEMA will establish a toll-free number and a website to assist in locating children and reunifying families.

The American Red Cross Safe and Well Program

- The American Red Cross Safe and Well Program is a web based tool that people can use to register their status and location. The website can be access via <https://safeandwell.communityos.org>. or at www.redcross.org click on Safe and Well link, or by phone at 1-866-GET-INFO (866-438-4636) for help with registration and the hearing impaired may call 1-800-526-1417.
- Registrant can leave brief messages, which if desired will update their Facebook or Twitter status as well.

Next of Kin Registry (NOKR)

- The NOKR is a FREE tool for daily emergencies and national disasters. NOKR is an emergency contact system to help if an individual or family member is missing, injured or deceased. NOKR is the central depository for Emergency Contact information in the United States plus 87 other countries.
- NOKR provides the public a free proactive service to store emergency contacts, next of kin and vital medical information that would be critical to emergency response agencies. Stored information is only accessible via a secure area that is only accessible by emergency public trust agencies that have registered with NOKR. For more information on this system, visit www.pleasenotifyme.org.



Family Interview Information

A family interview will be conducted by trained interviewers in a quiet and private location. The following information will need to be gathered from you. When you feel comfortable answering these questions, please make an appointment with the Family Interview Scheduler. If you would like an interpreter to be present during the interview please inform the Family Interview Scheduler. If you have any questions or concerns about the family interview please do not hesitate to ask any staff member.

Please be ready to provide the following information about your unaccounted for family member.

- Full Name
- Address
- Employer
 - Employer's Address
- Social Security Number
- Date of Birth
- Where Born
- Physical Description
 - Hair color, eye color, height, weight, shoe size
 - Distinguishing marks, scars, tattoos, piercings [please bring photographs of any of these marks if available]
 - History of surgery, missing organs or appendages
- Dentist and Physician Contact Information [please do not bring copies or originals of dental or medical records to the Family Assistance Center]
- Military Service History
 - Branch
 - Dates of Service
- If Married or Recognized Domestic Partner: name of spouse or domestic partner, with maiden name if applicable
- Photographs of person [preferably showing front teeth]
- Location of Fingerprints if available



How Identification is Made

The Chatham County Coroner may use many methods for identification. In the best of circumstances this may take time; in the case of a larger event it is possible that it will take weeks or even months to identify some decedents. Every decedent must be scientifically identified by the Coroner. This means that visual identification by family members will not be possible.

The Coroner may use one or more of the following methods to make positive identification.

Fingerprints

Fingerprints are a reliable form of identification that the Coroner may use. Inform the family interviewer if your family member has ever been officially fingerprinted while alive. If possible, provide information about the organization that documented the fingerprints. If fingerprints can be obtained from the remains of the individual the Coroner may use this to establish identification. If your family member was never officially fingerprinted, the Coroner may be able to match prints obtained from an object belonging to the individual that remains untouched by others.

Dental Records

Using dental records and dental x-rays can be a fast and reliable method of positive identification. Please provide contact information for your family member's dentist to the family interviewer. It is important to provide information on any dental work of which you are aware. If you are not aware of the existence of your family member's dental records, records may be found through payment or insurance records. If dental x-rays are not available, provide information regarding any records from the dentist:

- dental casts
- charting
- photographs

Medical Imaging

The Coroner may be able to positively identify someone by comparing x-rays of ANY PART of the body. This also includes a CAT scan (often taken in cases of suspected head injury). Hospitals and physicians usually only retain hard copy x-rays for seven years, but more modern technology uses digital x-rays, which may be available longer if not indefinitely. Please inform the family interviewer of the existence of any medical imaging of your family member.

Other useful information

Photos: A photo of the missing person smiling allows comparison of the front teeth and a straight-on photo of the head allows for superimposition with a skull.



Scars, marks, tattoos, surgery: Provide a description and picture if possible of any unique body markings. If the missing person is female, has she had any children? If the missing person is male, is he circumcised?

Missing organs/appendages: Provide the family interviewer with information about any removed organs (appendectomy, hysterectomy) or missing appendages (fingers, toes).

DNA

DNA can be used to identify victims in two ways. DNA gathered from the remains can be compared to DNA gathered from a biologically related family member. Or, DNA gathered from the remains can be compared to the person's own DNA taken from personal items. DNA can be gathered from these personal items used by the individual for the purpose of identification:

- hairbrush
- tooth brush
- razor
- underwear
- blood tests
- Pap smear
- blood donation
- PKU card (if born in Washington state; if decedent is under 21 and born in another state it is possible that the state has retained the card as well)

If a person's DNA sample is not available family members may be asked to provide a family reference sample. The person contributing the reference sample must be biologically related to the decedent, preferably the mother. This DNA is gathered by a non-invasive cheek swab. All DNA collected will be used for the purposes of identification only. If family members are not able to attend the Family Assistance Center to provide DNA, arrangements will be made to collect a DNA sample in person.

Potential obstacles for using DNA for identification

There are several potential obstacles to using DNA in identification of remains.

- DNA can not always be obtained from partial remains
- DNA testing can take a long time
- Results of comparing unidentified remains to the DNA of family members are often not statistically strong enough to provide a positive identification
- Heat will destroy DNA. If the remains were exposed to fire they may not yield a useful specimen.

If you have any questions or concerns about the DNA identification process please ask any of the DNA counselors.



Frequently Asked Questions When your Family Member is Missing

Q. How do I report my family member is unaccounted for?

- A.** To report that you cannot find your family member – that he or she is unaccounted for following a disaster – call or visit the Family Assistance Center. The Family Assistance Center will also have up to date information on the current status of the incident and the available missing person support.

Q. How can I help find my family member?

- A.** As a family member or friend you may have key information that can aid in finding your family member. Communicate all information to the Family Interviewer regarding your family member. You can also help by checking with their friends, school, work, neighbors, relatives, or anyone else who may know their whereabouts. Search web based programs to locate family members including social networking sites, the American Red Cross Safe and Well site, and any other internet sites set up to assist in finding family members. Follow up frequently with any contacts and keep the Family Interviewer informed of any developments.

Q. What information do you need from me to help find my family member?

- A.** A Family Interviewer will ask you for the information outlined on the Family Interview Information Sheet in this packet. Information will include a physical description of your family member, including any identifying marks they may have, descriptions of jewelry or clothing, and the contact information of your family member's dentist and physician. In addition, please provide any information you may have as to their last known whereabouts and anyone they may have been with.

Q. What is being done to find my family member?

- A.** The Family Assistance Center staff is working diligently with local law enforcement, healthcare organizations, shelters, and partners to locate your family member. If you have any questions regarding the specific steps that are being taken please do not hesitate to ask a Family Interview staff member.

Q. How long will it take to find my family member?

- A.** Depending on the incident it may take a prolonged period of time for the Family Assistance Center to locate your family member. We encourage you to continue to reach out through your regular channels to locate your family member.



Q. How do I know if my family member is injured, unaccounted for or deceased?

A. The Family Assistance Center staff is in close contact with local healthcare organizations and shelter organizations to identify if your family member is located at a healthcare facility or shelter. The Family Assistance Center staff is also coordinating with local law enforcement to identify if your family member is missing. If your family member is believed to be deceased, representatives of the Coroner's Office will meet with you when remains that might be your family member are recovered. If you are not able to be present in person at the Family Assistance Center, arrangements will be made to notify you in person.

Q. What happens if my family member is not found?

A. If the Family Assistance Center has closed and your family member has not yet been found, your case will be transferred to local law enforcement to continue investigation.

Q. Does anyone care that I cannot find my family member?

A. Yes, Family Assistance Center staff is working diligently to locate your family member as quickly as possible. If you have any questions regarding the process do not hesitate to ask any member of the staff.



Frequently Asked Questions When your Family Member is Deceased

Definitions

Cause of Death: The causal agent resulting in death

Manner of Death: The manner of death can be determined to be one of five categories: natural, accidental, homicide, suicide or undetermined

Q. Where is my family member?

- A. Your family member is in the care of the Chatham County Coroner's Office. The Coroner's Office has jurisdiction over all victims of this incident and is working to positively identify all victims and establish the cause and manner of death in accordance with Washington State law.

Q. How will I be notified if remains are identified or recovered?

- A. Representatives of the Coroner's Office will meet with you when remains that might be your family member are recovered. They will continue to meet with you regularly throughout the identification process. When a positive identification of your family member is made, you will be informed in person and given the opportunity to ask questions. If you are not able to be present in person at the Family Assistance Center, arrangements will be made to notify you in person. A phone number to the Family Assistance Center will be provided if you have any questions.

Q. Why can't I visually identify my family member's remains? Why must I wait for a scientific identification?

- A. For legal reasons, the Coroner's Office is required to establish positive identification on all victims of this incident. In most instances, positive identification requires scientific confirmation, either through DNA, fingerprints, or x-ray comparisons. The Coroner's Office is working as quickly as possible to establish positive identification of your family member.

Q. Why is it taking so long to identify the victims?

- A. The first step of the identification process is to confirm, through scientific means that your family member is deceased. This requires obtaining medical or dental x-rays, or waiting for fingerprint or DNA confirmation, all of which can take some time. After positive identification establishes that your family member is deceased, the Coroner will continue the identification process to insure that as much of your family member's remains are positively identified as possible.



Q. How did my family member die?

- A.** The Coroner will determine the cause and manner of your family member's death. The circumstances surrounding the death, including how it occurred, are part of the scene investigation by the Coroner's Office and investigating law enforcement agencies. When details are available, and when they are able, the Coroner's Office will provide you with any information regarding the death of your family member. However, details may not be available until much later in the investigative process.

Q. Did my family member suffer before they died?

- A.** This is very much dependent on the circumstances of your family member's death. The Coroner's Office will be working with the investigating agencies to understand the circumstances of the incident and will do their best to answer all of your questions regarding the death of your family member.

Q. Can I see the site of the incident?

- A.** The investigating agencies will determine when and if it is safe for family members to visit an incident scene. If visits are permitted, the Family Assistance Center will make arrangements to transport you to the incident scene. You are not required, or expected, to make the trip. Doing so is a personal decision.

Q. Will an autopsy be done?

- A.** The Coroner's Office is required by law to determine the cause and manner of death. In almost all incidences, this will require an autopsy examination. An autopsy is a surgical procedure performed by a medical doctor (forensic pathologist). The Coroner's Office recognizes that every decedent is a treasured member of a family and of a community and as such, treats each decedent with the highest respect and dignity.

Q. Can I choose not to have my family member's body autopsied?

- A.** No, the Coroner is required by law to certify the cause and manner of death; they do not require permission of the next of kin to perform an autopsy on a death under their jurisdiction.

Q. My cultural beliefs dictate that I must bury my family member's remains immediately, is this possible?

- A.** When made aware of time constraints, the Coroner's Office will do their best to expedite the examination and identification process. However, the circumstances of the incident may make it impossible to meet time limits. Please inform your Family Liaison Team of any cultural considerations and every effort will be made to accommodate those requests.



Q. My cultural beliefs dictate that my family member's body must not be marked or scared, is this possible?

A. The Coroner's Office will do their best to honor cultural traditions but cannot do so if it impedes the ability to certify cause and manner of death.

Q. What is the condition of my family member's remains?

A. The condition of your family member's remains is dependent on the circumstances of his/her death. Coroner staff will provide you with honest answers to your questions regarding the condition of your family member's remains. How much information is requested and how detailed that information is a personal choice and entirely up to you.

Q. Can I see my family member's remains?

A. The standard protocol is that the Coroner recommends that all viewing be done at the funeral home. Viewing prior to release to a funeral home is at the discretion of the Chief Coroner and is dependent on a number of factors related to the investigation. The ability to view your family member's remains is also dependent on the condition of the remains. Any decision regarding viewing will be communicated to you by Family Assistance Center Staff.

Q. What should I do if my family member's remains are identified over a prolonged period of time?

A. Because the Coroner will do everything possible to identify as much of your family member as possible, it is entirely conceivable that the identification process will take a prolonged period of time. The Notification Team at the Family Assistance Center will discuss with you whether you would prefer to be notified each time an identification is made or whether you prefer to be notified when all identifications are complete and the remains are ready for release to a funeral home.

Q. Can my family member's remains be released to the funeral home/location of my choice?

A. Yes, the Coroner's Office will work with whatever funeral home you choose to transfer care of your family member once the examination and identification is complete. A Decedent Affairs staff member will help coordinate any disposition arrangements.

Q. What will happen with the remains that can not be identified?

A. If there are remains that are not identified despite all efforts to the contrary, the Coroner will meet with each family to discuss the options and decisions regarding those remains.



Q. Can I receive my family member's personal affects?

- A.** Yes, personal effects will be released to the legal next of kin. If the legal next of kin is not local, they can designate in writing someone to act on their behalf in receiving personal effects. Personal effects may not be releasable if they are in any way contaminated or are considered evidence in a criminal investigation.



Taking Care of Yourself and Your Family

Coping with the Loss of a Family Member

- Simplify your life for a while. Make a list of the things that you are responsible for in your life, such as taking care of the kids, buying groceries, or going to work. Then, look at your list and see which things are absolutely necessary. Is there anything you can put aside for a while? Are there things you can let go of completely?
- Take care of your mind and body. Eat healthy food. Exercise regularly, even if it is only a long walk every day. Exercise will help lift depression and help you sleep better, too. Massage can also help release tension and comfort you.
- Rely on people you trust. Seek information, advice and help from them.
- Begin to restore order in your world by reestablishing old routines at work, home, or school as much as possible. Stay busy with work that occupies you mind; avoid overtaxing yourself with too much activity; leave yourself some down time to relax.
- Talk to your children, who are often the invisible victims of these events, and make sure they are part of your reactions, activities, and plans.
- Ask for help from family, friends, or professionals when you need it. Healing trauma, grief, and loss is similar to healing your body after illness or an accident. Just as there are doctors and nurses who are trained to help heal the body, there are professionals who are trained to help people recover from loss and cope with emotional pain.
- Think about things that give you hope. Make a list of these things and turn to them on bad days

**Adapted from the U.S. Department of Justice, Federal Bureau of Investigation,
Office for Victim Assistance: *Help for Victims of Crimes***



Notifying Government and Financial Agencies

When a family member or friend has died, it is important to notify various government agencies, banks, creditors and credit reporting agencies of the death. To reduce the risk of identity theft, these notifications should be made promptly after the death.

To expedite notification, you should initially make the contact by telephone followed by written verification. For many of the government agencies and financial entities, you will need the decedent's social security number, a copy of the death certificate, and, if you are a personal representative (executor) of the estate, your appointment form from the probate court. Make sure to retain copies of all notices that you send.

Below is a checklist of possible agencies and businesses that should be notified of the death. Because each individual case is unique, the list may not be complete. Also, the funeral home may have notified some of the government agencies on your behalf. Please consult with the funeral director when you receive this list so you can check off those agencies which have been notified by the funeral director.

Government Agencies

- ☐ Social Security Administration, 800-772-1213 (everyone)
- ☐ Veteran's Administration (if decedent was formerly in the military)
- ☐ Defense Finance and Accounting Services, 800-269-5170 (military service retiree receiving benefits).
- ☐ Officer of Personnel management, 888-767-6738 (if decedent is a retired or former federal civil service employee).
- ☐ U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, 800-375-5283 (if decedent was not a U.S. citizen)
- ☐ State Department of Motor Vehicles (if decedent had a driver's license or state ID).

Financial Companies

- ☐ Credit card and merchant card companies
- ☐ Banks, savings and loan associations, and credit unions
- ☐ Mortgage companies and lenders
- ☐ Financial planners and stockbrokers
- ☐ Pension providers

Insurance and annuity companies

- ☐ Life insurers and annuity companies
- ☐ Health, medical and dental insurers
- ☐ Disability insurer
- ☐ Automotive insurer
- ☐ Mutual benefit companies

Adapted from Death Notification Checklist, National Funeral Directors Association (NFDA)



Credit Reporting Agencies

There are three national credit reporting agencies which you should notify of the death and instruct them to list all accounts as: "Closed. Account Holder is Deceased." You may also request a credit report to obtain a list of all creditors and to review recent credit activities. A sample notification letter is available for you convenience.

- ☐ Experian, 888-397-3742, P.O. Box 9701 Allen, Texas 75013
- ☐ Equifax, 800-525-6285, P.O. Box 105069, Atlanta, Georgia 30348
- ☐ TransUnion, 800-680-7289, P.O. Box 6790, Fullerton, California 92834

Memberships

- ☐ Professional associations and unions
- ☐ Health clubs and athletic clubs
- ☐ Automobile clubs
- ☐ Video rental stores
- ☐ Public library
- ☐ Alumni clubs
- ☐ Rotary, Kiwanis, Lions, Veterans' organizations and clubs

Do not contact lists

For a fee of \$1.00, you can list the decedent's name on the Deceased Do Not Contact List which is maintained by the Direct Marketing Association. All members of the Direct Marketing Association will delete the decedent's name from their mailing lists once the name is posted. A website for registering the name is set forth below:

- ☐ Direct marketing Association (register at www.ims-dm.com/cgi/ddnc)



Credit Reporting Agency Notification

Credit Agencies: Check below each Credit Reporting Agency you wish to send this Notification. It is recommended that you send the Notification to each Credit Reporting Agency with copies of the death certificate and, if you are the personal representative of the estate, your appointment papers from the Probate Court. Prior to sending, make copies for your records.

☐ Experian
P.O. Box 9701
Allen, Texas 75013

☐ Equifax
P.O. Box 105069
Atlanta, Georgia 30348

☐ TransUnion
P.O. Box 6790
Fullerton, CA 92834

Identification Information: Fill in the information below for yourself as Requesting Party and for the Decedent

Requesting Party

Name _____

Address _____

Phone Number(s)

(w) _____

(h) _____

Decedent

Name _____

Date of Death _____

Date of Birth _____

Location of Birth _____

Social Security Number _____

Prior Addresses of Decedent: List the address of all residences of the Decedent over the past five years starting with the most recent

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Relationship of Requesting Party to Decedent: Please identify your relationship to the Decedent

☐ Spouse ☐ Personal Representative of Estate ☐ Other: _____

Directions to Credit Agency: Please initial each request you wish to make to the Credit Agency receiving this Notification.

_____ Post on the Decedent's credit report: "Deceased. Do Not Issue Credit".

_____ Please forward to me at the address listed above the current copy of the Decedent's credit report.

Signature of Requesting Party

Date



Resources/Contact Information

[Update with event specific information]

Family Assistance Center

Address

Phone Number

Chatham County Coroner

Address

Phone Number

Vital Statistics

Address

Phone Number

Mental Health

Phone Number

Spiritual Care

Phone Number

Social Services

Phone Number

FEMA

Phone Number

American Red Cross

Address

Phone Number

Crime Victims Assistance

Phone Number

Federal Bureau of Investigation

Office of Victim Assistance

Phone Number: (202) 324-3000

[illegible]

[illegible]