

**National Association of Medical Examiners (NAME) Standards:**

Medicolegal death investigation officers are appointed or elected to safeguard the public interest. Deaths by criminal violence, deaths of infants and children, and deaths in the custody of law enforcement agencies or governmental institutions-- can arouse public interest, raise questions, or engender mistrust of authority. Further, there are specific types of circumstances in which a forensic autopsy provides the best opportunity for competent investigation, including those needing identification of the deceased and cases involving bodies in water, charred or skeletonized bodies, intoxicants or poisonings, electrocutions, and fatal workplace injuries. Performing autopsies protects the public interest and provides the information necessary to address legal, public health, and public safety issues in each case. For categories other than those listed below, the decision to perform an autopsy involves professional discretion or is dictated by local guidelines. For the categories listed below, the public interest is so compelling that one must always assume that questions will arise that require information obtainable only by forensic autopsy.

**The forensic pathologist shall perform a forensic autopsy when:**

- B3.1 the death is known or suspected to have been caused by apparent criminal violence.
- B3.2 the death is unexpected and unexplained in an infant or child.
- B3.3 the death is associated with police action.
- B3.4 the death is apparently nonnatural and in custody of a local, state, or federal institution.
- B3.5 the death is due to acute workplace injury.
- B3.6 the death is caused by apparent electrocution.
- B3.7 the death is by apparent intoxication by alcohol, drugs, or poison.
- B3.8 the death is caused by unwitnessed or suspected drowning.
- B3.9 the body is unidentified and the autopsy may aid in identification.
- B3.10 the body is skeletonized.
- B3.11 the body is charred.
- B3.12 the forensic pathologist deems a forensic autopsy is necessary to determine cause or manner of death or collect evidence.