

Matters of Record

Dec 2016.jpg – Northern Lights (Aurora), by AJ Batac, CC BY-NC-ND 2.0, <https://flic.kr/p/rpTjgR>

County Vital Records news December 2016

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Dear County Registrars and Deputy Registrars,

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for ensuring that Oregon’s vital records and statistics system continues to be effective and secure. Your new commissions start January 1, 2017. You should receive your commission certificates by the end of this year.

The integrity of the Oregon Vital Records system depends on the work done by the County Vital Records Registrars and Deputies. Your duties, as well as mine, are outlined in law and rule - [ORS 432.035](#) and [OAR 333-011-0205](#). Our work has been determined to be mission critical by the Office of the State Public Health Director because it is essential that Oregonians be able to establish legal records documenting vital events, such as births and deaths and that data are available to measure key health indicators throughout the state and nation.

We have developed a [web page](#) just for staff of county vital records offices. You will find newsletters, access to the county webinars we provide, information about fees, links to the triennial review tool, and a description of your responsibilities as County Registrar or Deputy Registrar.

During 2017, we will offer webinars on specific vital records topics. Business continuity planning will continue throughout the year. In June, we will start preparing for an increase in vital records fees to \$25 for second copies of records. The fee increase will go into effect on January 1, 2018.

Thank you for your hard work during 2016. We look forward to working with you in 2017 and beyond.

Best regards,

Jennifer A. Woodward, Ph.D.
State Registrar



p.s.: Our tag line is “We are vital & we count.”

Every three days

It is critical and required for the County Vital Records office to forward death records to the State Vital Records office within three business days. The process and its timeline is governed by [Oregon Revised Statute](#) (ORS) and [Administrative Rule](#) (OAR). Here are some quotes from ORS and OAR regarding the agenda of forwarding death records:



gavel.jpg – My Trusty Gavel, by Brian Turner, CC BY 2.0, <https://flic.kr/p/622SAn>

- ORS 432.133(1)(a)

A report of death for each death that occurs in this state must be submitted to the county registrar of the county in which the death occurred or to the Center for Health Statistics, or as otherwise directed by the State Registrar of the Center for Health Statistics...

- OAR 333-011-0205(3)

... The county registrar shall forward death records that have been filed at the county to the state registrar within three business days of the date filed by the county registrar.

By forwarding death records within three business days, the state gets the records entered and registered, and amended quickly. Once registered in OVERS, the records can be issued directly from the system. If you have any questions about the death record, please feel free to contact Cynthia Roeser at cynthia.r.roeser@state.or.us or 971-673-0478. If you would like to order the prepaid “Oregon Health Authority” business-reply envelopes for mailing death records, please contact Linda Reynolds at linda.i.reynolds@state.or.us or 971-673-1173.

How to review death correction affidavits

County registrars need to know how to identify whether a death correction affidavit is legally sufficient. Some affidavits must be rejected if items are missing or not supported by the affidavit reason or evidence. Funeral directors need to submit affidavits on the new form (dated 01/16) to provide the information needed to make this determination. A copy of this affidavit can be found at <http://public.health.oregon.gov/BirthDeathCertificates/ChangeVitalRecords/Documents/45-27A.pdf>

Do not accept correction affidavits unless they include the following items:

- The decedent’s full legal name as it is listed on the death record.
- The date of death (month/day/year).
- The place of death – either the city and state or the county where the death took place – not the type of place of death.
- The reason for the amendment in the “Reasons #” column. This information is especially important for changes to SSN, marital status and name of spouse.
- Information in the “Original Record Now Shows” column must be identical to the information on the record.

Some affidavits must be rejected if items are missing or not supported by the affidavit reason or evidence.

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- Funeral director’s signature and legible printed name.
- Funeral director’s signature date and license number.

Remember that once a death record is registered, the informant’s name cannot be changed to a completely different name. Also, refer all changes to marital status or the name of spouse to the state office unless correction affidavits are submitted with the original death record before registration. If minor typographical corrections are submitted after the death record is registered, please call before approving the amendments. Frequently Derrick Patterson will need to call the funeral director to obtain additional affidavits and/or evidence documents to make legal changes to marital status or spouse’s name on a registered record.

For questions regarding whether you should complete an amendment to the personal data section of a death certificate please contact Derrick Patterson at derrick.c.patterson@state.or.us or call him at 971-673-1163.

Integrity of vital records

In 2011 the *Sight Verification Tool – Death Certificate* was sent to each county vital records office. The tool was designed to help with review of death certificates received from funeral homes.

Recently, the Center for Health Statistics has received several records that were not acceptable or legally sufficient. Some examples are:

- A death record that was printed from the Oregon Vital Events Registration System (OVERS) with the words “Working Copy” printed across the record on the paper with a purple stripe (Form 45-1B). The funeral home staff took this working copy to the medical certifier’s office for signature. The signed working copy was registered by county vital records staff.
- A death record that was printed on white paper from OVERS instead of white paper with the purple stripe (Form 45-1B). The funeral home staff took this white paper copy to the medical certifier’s office for signature. The signed white paper copy was registered by county vital records staff.
- A death record was not signed and dated by the medical certifier. The unsigned white paper copy was registered by county vital records staff.

All of the records noted above would have been rejected if the county staff had used the Sight Verification Tool. Using this tool will provide better service - not only to funeral home staff, but also to families who will be able to purchase certified copies faster.

If you have any questions, please call Cynthia Roeser at 971-673-0478 or email her at cynthia.r.roeser@state.or.us.

FOR COUNTY USE ONLY
SIGHT VERIFICATION TOOL - Death certificate
OREGON HEALTH AUTHORITY
CENTER FOR HEALTH STATISTICS
CERTIFICATE OF DEATH

Check for ID Tag: 245874
Must be your county: Multnomah
Death must have occurred in the last 6 months: June 22, 2011

1. Legal Name Last: John First: Middle: Last: Suffix:	2. Death Date June 22, 2011
3. Sex Male	4. Age 56 years
5. Social Security Number 516-13-1321	6. County of Death Multnomah
7. Date of Birth March 12, 1955	8. Education High school grad. or GED
9. Year Issued of Foreign Birth None	10. Decedent's Race(s) White
11. U.S. Armed Forces Yes	12. U.S. Armed Forces Yes
13. Residence - Number and Street 123 N Oak Street City: Multnomah	14. City/Town Portland
15. State of Foreign Country Oregon	17. ZIP Code - 4 97111
16. Marital Status at Time of Death Never married	18. Inmate/On Lease? Yes
19. Marital Status None	20. Special License Prior to This Marriage None
21. Patient's Name James Doe	22. Kind of Business/Industry Construction
23. Informant's Name Curtis Doe	24. Marital Status Prior to First Marriage Married
25. Informant's Relationship to Decedent Not Available	26. Informant's Address 1477 N Prime Street, Portland, OR 94554
27. Place of Death Funeral Home	28. Facility Name

What should county registrars or deputies do if they see a death record with information about Death with Dignity?

The Death with Dignity Act requires strict confidentiality for all participating patients and physicians. Participation in the program is confidential from the funeral home and vital records staff. *Anyone reading the death certificate should not know that the decedent initiated their rights under Death with Dignity Act.* The death certificate should show that the decedent died naturally of his or her terminal illness. As an example, the death certificate could show Cause of Death as Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis and Manner of Death as Natural. References to Death with Dignity, or Physician Assisted Suicide, should **not** appear anywhere on the death certificate.

Words or acronyms to watch for:

- PAS
- Death with dignity
- Comfort care
- Physician assisted
- Legally prescribed
- ORS 127.800 or OAR 333-009-0030
- DWD
- or legal prescription

Additionally, check for records with manner of death as suicide or cause of death as ‘overdose’ when the medical certifier is not a Medical Examiner.

If you receive a certificate of death that appears to reference Death with Dignity or Physician Assisted Suicide, do not register the certificate or issue certified copies. Please contact JoAnn Jackson, Registration Manager at 971-673-1160 or joann.jackson@state.or.us if you have questions or need assistance in resolving situations involving Death with Dignity. If you would like to read more about Death with Dignity (DWD), information is available at www.healthoregon.org/dwd.

24-hour Notice of Receipt of Body cards and Authorization for Disposition forms

County vital records offices usually receive the 24-hour Notice of Receipt of Body card from a funeral practitioner within 24 hours of the death event. To date, this has been a successful and regularly occurring process at county offices. When the card is received, county staff do not need to do anything, other than to expect the arrival of the corresponding death record.

Oregon law ORS 432.158 requires that an Authorization for Disposition for human remains be completed. The funeral home practitioner provides the disposition authorization to the sexton or the person in charge of the place where interment of the human remains is made. The person in charge of the interment should send the completed disposition authorization to the county registrar in the county in which death occurred. However, county staff tell us that this is not occurring regularly. Often, when the disposition permit is received at the county, it is the funeral practitioner who provided it, but more often, the permit is not received at all.

The form is titled "24-HOUR NOTICE OF RECEIPT OF BODY" and is issued by the Oregon Health Department, Public Health Division - Center for Health Statistics. It includes instructions: "This report must be sent to the registrar of the county in which death occurred within 24 hours of taking possession of the body." The form contains several fields: "Full name of decedent:", "Date of death:", "County of death:", "Place of death (street, city or institution):", "Funeral home name and address:", "Medical examiner notified?" (with Yes/No checkboxes), "Date report filed:", "Date report sent to state:", "Local file number (optional):", "I.D. tag number:", "Disposition permit received?" (with Yes/No checkboxes and "if yes, date received"), and "Check if fetal death" (checkbox) with "Mother's name from Report of Fetal Death:" field. A small number "45-106 (8/11/14)" is in the bottom right corner.

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If a county registrar is not *routinely* receiving a disposition authorization, county staff should contact the sexton, or the person in charge of the interment, to inform him or her that the disposition authorization was not received, and request that the authorization be sent to the county registrar.

The disposition authorization, as well as 24-hour card, should be received for each death event. Once the death record is received, the 24-hour card and disposition authorization may be shredded.

County staff should register the death record if legally sufficient. Not receiving the disposition authorization does not prevent the record from being registered or certificates from being issued.

If you have any questions, please contact JoAnn Jackson, Center for Health Statistics Registration Manager at joann.jackson@state.or.us, or, feel free to telephone her at 971-673-1160.

Important Reminder: The fee is for the search

During our last quarterly county vital records webinar in November, there were several questions about whether county staff can provide a customer a preview of a record before a certificate is issued. We would like to remind everyone that Oregon Administrative Rule (OAR) 333-011-0340 clearly states that a fee is charged for *searching* for the record. County (and State) vital records staff should not share any information from birth or death records before releasing them. When there are minor discrepancies, such as spelling errors, between information on the record and information on the order form, do not print a working copy for the customer, but instead, do one of the following:

- Issue the certificate, and if any information needs to be corrected, direct the customer to the State office to have an amendment done. It is helpful for the customer to have the certificate, even though it is incorrect, to more easily identify and clarify what changes are needed. Remember that one free birth record replacement is provided when an amendment is made if the original certificate was issued within the past year and is returned to the State or County office.

OR

- Make a copy of the order form and circle the minor discrepancies on the order form. Your office should keep the original order form. In this situation, you don't issue a certified copy. Give the customer the copied order form with the minor discrepancies noted on it, and provide the customer with [this handout](#) that has information on how to request an amendment from the State office. Please note, **you would still charge the customer the fee because the fee is for searching for the record.**

If you have any questions, please contact Karen Rangan at 971-673-1182 or email her at karen.l.rangan@state.or.us.



Business continuity – Personal preparedness

This continues our discussion on emergency preparedness

The first step of having an office that is prepared for emergencies is to have staff who are prepared for emergencies. Most of us would find it very difficult to focus on our work when we do not know if our family is safe, where we will sleep or whether we will have food to eat.

In planning for emergencies, plan for provisions at your home, in your car and at work (at least enough to get you home). Broad considerations include:

- **Safety for yourself and your family** —
 - » Where will everyone meet?
 - » Where is the back-up location?
- **Food and water** —
 - » Do you have enough food and water for three days (minimum) and is it accessible in an emergency?
 - » If you have pets, do you have food and water for them?
- **Shelter, including heat** —
 - » Is your home likely to be habitable?
 - » If you need to turn off utilities, do you have access to the tools needed?
- **Communication** —
 - » Can you use family members outside the area as a call-in point?
 - » Do people know to send text messages instead of calling? (This uses less power and is more likely to be transmitted.)

Just like planning an office response to an emergency, additional questions will pop up as you start planning for your family.

- Do you have to cross a bridge/river/overpass to reach the primary and back-up meeting locations?
- If emergency food requires cooking, do you have a camp stove and fuel?
- Do you have sleeping bags or warm blankets accessible?
- How about a hand crank radio to receive news?

There are great resources available through the Oregon Office of Emergency Management (<https://www.oregon.gov/OMD/OEM/Pages/preparedness-information.aspx>), Department of Homeland Security (<https://www.ready.gov>) and the Red Cross (<http://www.redcross.org/flash/brr/English-html/quick-resources.asp>). Resources include brochures and plan outlines for families, seniors, pet owners, and persons with disabilities.

We strongly encourage you to take the time to formalize your personal preparedness plans. Misunderstandings and gaps are more easily identified when things are written down. Similar to planning for the office, do not be overwhelmed by the amount of planning and activity needed to prepare. Recognize that knowing the questions and needs is progress toward being better prepared.

Wishing you all a safe and happy holiday season!



Wanted – Newsletter topics

Have a question or idea for a future newsletter article? Contact Judy Shioishi, at 971-673-1166 or judy.shioishi@state.or.us. Judy collects ideas for articles and then shares them with the writing team.

Thank you to the contributors of this newsletter:

Jennifer Woodward, Jamie Gould, Linda Reynolds, Carolyn Hogg, Krystalyn Salyer, Judy Shioishi, Kelli Wasson, Karen Hampton, Craig New, Cody Wang, Juana Anguiano Rivera, Carol Sanders, Derrick Patterson, JoAnn Jackson, Karen Rangan, Mason Mohamed, Cynthia Roeser, Megan Welter, Lynda Jackson.

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Portland, OR 97293-0050

General information: 971-673-1190

Order vital records: 1-888-896-4988

Website:

[http://public.health.oregon.gov/
BirthDeathCertificates](http://public.health.oregon.gov/BirthDeathCertificates)

OVERS website:

<http://healthoregon.org/overs>

PUBLIC HEALTH DIVISION

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Contact the Center for Health Statistics at 971-673-1173 or 711 for TTY.