



# Matters of Record

crocus 2, by liz west, flickr gallery, <http://www.flickr.com/photos/calliope/7309362/>

## News from the Center for Health Statistics Concerning the Oregon Death Certificate

Issue: March 2014

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### LETTER FROM THE STATE REGISTRAR

Dear Colleagues:

Newsletters, like this one, are a primary way we communicate vital information to you about the processes, procedures, rules and laws related to completing and processing death records (AKA death certificates). Please take a few minutes to read the newsletter each time it is sent. We work hard to try to make them interesting and helpful.

The Center for Health Statistics publishes two newsletters focusing on death records each year. Each edition is sent to funeral directors via the email list that we have. If you have a generic email for OVERS, it will go to that email. Let us know if you would like us to add your individual email address to our mailing list. Paper versions of the newsletter are mailed to funeral homes that are not using OVERS. Currently there are only three Oregon-licensed funeral homes not using OVERS. Each issue of the newsletter is posted on our web site at <http://public.health.oregon.gov/BirthDeathCertificates/RegisterVitalRecords/Pages/DeathNews.aspx>. Using the web and email to share the newsletters allows us to provide information quickly at very little cost.

We are always interested in getting ideas for articles. If you have an idea, please share it with Judy Shioishi at [Judy.Shioishi@state.or.us](mailto:Judy.Shioishi@state.or.us).

Death records are among the most important legal documents families need to settle the affairs of their loved ones. They record the last vital event in a person's life. In addition to being legal records, they also provide essential information

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Letter from the State Registrar (Continued from page 1)

used to assess the health of the population. For example, the number of deaths, life expectancy, infant mortality, and leading causes of death are used internationally as key measures of health. Because these documents are so important, we need to work together to ensure that death records are completed timely and accurately. ❖

Best regards,



State Registrar

## FAQs: Veterans'-use-only certified copies

Beginning January 1, 2014, there is a change in procedure for issuance of veterans'-use-only certified copies.

### *Why was the procedure changed?*

The intent of the law is to support access to veterans' benefits for the family without incurring the cost of a certified copy. The Oregon Department of Veterans' Affairs estimates that only four percent (4%) of families access veterans' benefits other than the burial benefits. Directing veterans'-use-only certified copies to the Veterans' Service Offices (VSOs) should support the use of benefits.

### *So what are we supposed to do?*

To best serve the families of veterans, we ask that you:

- continue to meet with families to complete the Application for Burial Benefits if this is part of your current services;
- order veterans'-use-only certified copies using a written application form;
- include where to send the veterans'-use-only certified copies (and the Application for Burial Benefits, if relevant); and

- encourage the family to contact the local VSO for full information on benefits that might be available.

### *What are veterans'-use-only certified copies?*

State and county vital records offices can provide up to two free certified copies of vital records – usually death certificates – to VSOs in support of pending applications for veterans' benefits.

### *What is the procedural change?*

Free veterans'-use-only certified copies will no longer be given directly to funeral directors or family members. Funeral directors and families will order the veterans'-use-only certified copies and specify any VSO to receive the record. The vital records office will then send the certified copies to the VSO specified on the order form.

If there are documents, such as the Application for Burial Benefits, that need to go with the certified copy, the county (or state) vital records office will include the documents when mailing the certified copy to the VSO.

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## House Bill 2093 and medical certifiers from bordering states

With the passing of House Bill 2093 by the Oregon Legislature, active, licensed medical certifiers from the states of Washington, Idaho and California can now sign an Oregon Certificate of Death.

Under House Bill 2093, ORS 432.005, Section 1 (22) has been amended to read **“a medical certifier means a physician, physician assistant or nurse practitioner licensed under the laws of this state or under the laws of Washington, Idaho or California who has treated a decedent within the 12 months preceding death.”**

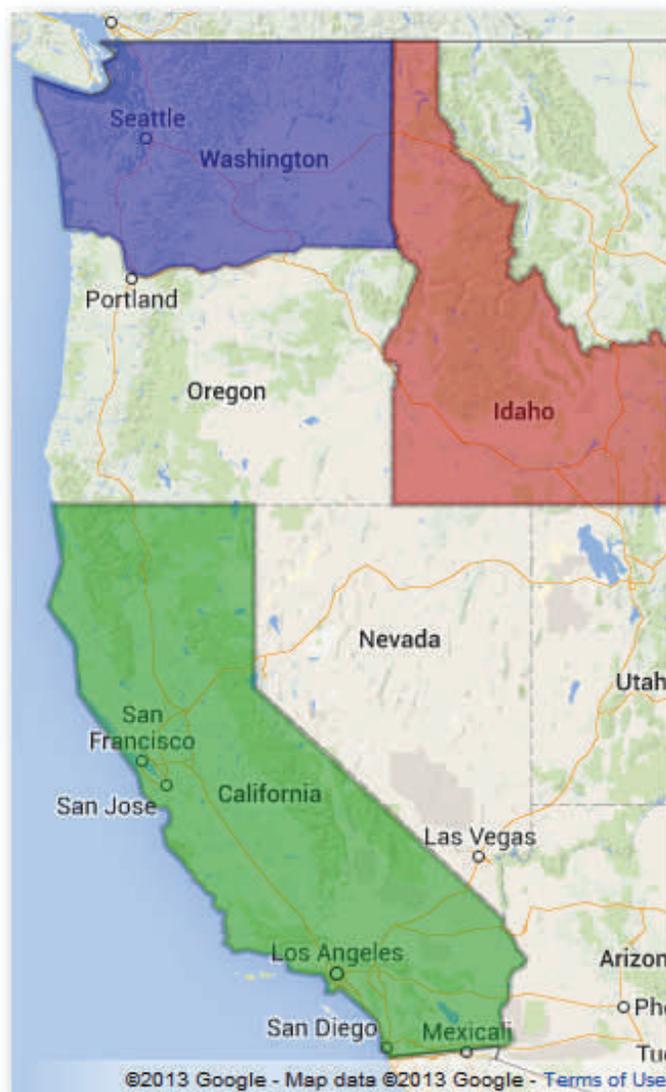
This change in law became effective in Oregon on January 1, 2014. Medical certifiers holding an active medical license from Washington, Idaho or California are now legally able to sign an Oregon Certificate of Death. Any death that occurred **prior to January 1, 2014** is still subject to the previously established three-step process when a death certificate is signed by an out-of-state medical certifier:

1. Does the certifier practicing in another state have an Oregon active medical license? If so, that license number should be reported on the death certificate. If not, proceed to step two.
2. Does the certifier have a colleague who is willing to sign the death certificate and has an Oregon active medical license? If so, that certifier can complete the death certificate based on the medical record. If not, proceed to step three.
3. Contact JoAnn Jackson, Registration Manager at 971-673-1160 or via email at: [joann.jackson@state.or.us](mailto:joann.jackson@state.or.us) for individual problem solving.

Medical Certifiers who sign on behalf of the

United States Veterans Health Administration or Indian Health Services offices may still sign an Oregon Certificate of Death, regardless of the state in which their active license is held. This rule has not changed under House Bill 2093.

For further information on House Bill 2093, please visit: <https://olis.leg.state.or.us/liz/2013R1/Measures/Overview/HB2093>. If you have any questions about signing Oregon Certificates of Death, please contact JoAnn Jackson, our Registration Manager. ❖



## 24-hour notice of receipt of body

***Where did this come from? It looks like the abstract card, but different.***

Prior to January 1, 2014, Form 45-106 combined the public abstract under ORS 432.119 and the 24-hour notice of receipt of body under 432.317. The requirement of the 24-hour notice *continues from previous law* and is not a new requirement. The public abstract has ended.

***Where do we get the new form?***

Form 45-106 (24-hour Notice of Receipt of Body) is available as the traditional postcard-sized hard copy ordered from our office or as a fillable PDF form. The fillable form was shared as an attachment to a listserv message on January 9.

***How does the form get to the county?***

The form can be faxed to the county vital records office, which is the most effective way to provide timely notice. The list of county fax numbers is available online at <http://public.health.oregon.gov/BirthDeathCertificates/RegisterVitalRecords/Documents/countyfax.pdf>.

The postcard form can also be mailed.

***When do we use the form?***

It is important that the county vital records office receive the notice within 24 hours of receipt of the body even if the family has not yet made funeral arrangements. The obligation to report lies with the funeral services practitioner who first assumes custody of the body.

***Can we use the older version of the form?***

No, only the current version of the form should be used. If you choose to use the postcard-sized hard copy form, confirm the revision date of 01/14. Previous versions of the form that served as public abstract as well as notice of receipt of body should be recycled.

***Who do we contact with questions?***

If you need the fillable PDF form sent to your facility, would like the form pre-filled with your facility's information, or have other questions on the form, contact Karen Hampton at 971-673-1191 or at [Karen.R.Hampton@stateor.us](mailto:Karen.R.Hampton@stateor.us). ❖

		<b>24-HOUR NOTICE OF RECEIPT OF BODY</b> Public Health Division — Center for Health Statistics This report must be sent to the registrar of the county in which death occurred within 24 hours of taking possession of the body.	
Full name of deceased:			
Date of death:		County of death:	
Place of death (street, city or institution):			
Funeral home name and address:		Medical examiner notified? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
Date report filed:		Date report sent to state:	
Local file number (optional):		I.D. tag number:	
Disposition permit received? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No		If yes, date received:	
<input type="checkbox"/> Check if fetal death		Mother's name from Report of Fetal Death:	

45-106 (01/14)

## Short form death records

### *When are short form death records required?*

Family members are encouraged to use short form death records unless a long form is required. The only reasons for obtaining a long form are for genealogy/family medical history and for claiming benefits from insurance where cause/manner of death can change the benefit.

**HB 2093 Section 34:** “A document recording a death filed in conjunction with owning or having a claim or interest in land may not include medical information related to the cause of death.”

**OAR 333-011-0335 (10)** “Certified copies of death records used to record the transfer of property in Oregon must not include cause of death information if

- (a) The death occurred after 1977;
- (b) The death occurred in Oregon; and
- (c) The certified copy is issued after

January 1, 2014”.

### *Can long form deaths be returned for short forms?*

The state office currently provides free short form replacements when the original long forms are returned within one year from the date of issuance. Up to three death records can be replaced free of charge. We expect that the volume of replacement requests will be small enough for our office to continue to provide this service.

We hope to minimize the work for funeral homes and vital record offices related to replacements by educating families about the need for short forms at the time they order. We recommend that every initial order for death records include at least one short form death record. ❖

Death short form requirement  
when using as proof of death for property transfer

		Date of issuance	
		Prior to 2014	2014+
Oregon occurrence	Date of death		
	1977 or earlier	Long form allowed	Long form allowed
	1978 to 2013	Long form allowed	<del>Short form required *</del>
	2014+	Short form required	Short form required

If death occurred somewhere other than Oregon; certified copy can have cause of death

\*House Bill 4056 (2014) has passed the Oregon House and Senate and is ready for the Governor's signature. This bill amends ORS 432.355 and limits the requirement for a short form to Oregon deaths occurring after 2014. This drops the requirement in law for short forms for Oregon deaths prior to 2014 but issued after January 1, 2014. Short forms for property transfers are always recommended.

***Is the procedural change because of the new law?***

No. The change in the law was very minor, *expanding* its scope from only war veterans to all veterans. The current law continues the limitation of requested copies in support of a pending application for benefits from the U.S. Department of Veterans' Affairs. We have interpreted 'pending application' broadly to include an Application for Burial Benefits that has been prepared, but not yet sent, to the VSO.

***Shouldn't these free certified copies be available to all veterans, regardless of use?***

The statute provides for free certified copies specifically in connection with veterans' benefits. These copies are intended to help the family access veterans' benefits from a VSO without incurring the cost of a certified copy. The Center for Health Statistics recently became aware that free certified copies intended for use in processing veterans' benefits had become confused with free certified copies to any veteran for general use.

***So how does the Veterans' Services Office get the certified copy?***

The funeral director or family member can order the veterans'-use-only certified copies, but the documents will be sent directly to a VSO by the vital records office. This can be a local, state, regional or national office as identified on the application. The certified copy will be sent to the VSO by the state or county vital records office.

Applications for Burial Benefits are usually processed by the Portland regional U.S. Department of Veterans' Affairs. Pre-addressed, postage-paid envelopes are available for that purpose and will be shared

with county vital records offices in the next few weeks.

***There is significant delay in processing the Application for Burial Benefits if the application is incomplete (no certified copy). What is happening about that?***

County vital records offices have been instructed that if the family or a funeral home representative provides the Application for Burial Benefits to the county vital records office with the order for the veterans'-use-only certified copy, the application should be sent with the certified copy.

***What if the Application for Burial Benefits is not completed when the certified copies are ordered?***

If the family has not completed the Application for Burial Benefits, the veterans'-use-only certified copies can be ordered separately at a later date. Since there is no fee for the certified copy, there is no impact on the family to order separately.

***Do veterans'-use-only copies have to be ordered at the same time as other certified copies?***

No, veterans'-use-only copies can be ordered at any time. Just provide the county or state vital records office with an order and the Application for Burial Benefits, if applicable, along with the address of the appropriate VSO. The vital records office will send the free copy.

***How will the county or state vital records office know where to send the veterans-use-only certified copies?***

The most frequent use of veterans'-use-only certified copies are for the Application for Burial Benefits. Those applications can be sent to the Portland regional U.S.

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Department of Veterans' Affairs office at:  
USDVA  
100 SW Main St., FL 2  
Portland OR 97204

For other applications or contacts, the order form must indicate where to send the veterans'-use-only certified copies. These copies go only to a Veterans' Services Office, but can go to any VSO (local, state, regional, or national). Veterans'-use-only certified copies are not delivered to the funeral home or family. A VSO can order a free certified copy when needed if the family does not know whether a veterans' use only certified copy is needed or which VSO should receive the certified copy.

***Where are the addresses for the Veterans' Services Offices?***

The Oregon Department of Veterans' Affairs maintains contact information for state, county, and regional offices. (See at <http://www.oregon.gov/odva/VSODIRECT/Pages/LOCATOR.aspx>) The family, guided by funeral home experience, should determine which office gets the certified copies. It is important that families talk with the county VSO whenever possible to assure they are aware of all the benefits available.

***What if the family does not want the county or state vital records office to see the information on the application for burial benefits?***

We understand that families might want privacy. Postage-paid envelopes are being provided so that the application can be sealed in the envelope and then given to the vital records office.

***What if the family orders directly from the county or state vital records office?***

Families will receive the same service and

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limitations as funeral homes. The veterans'-use-only certified copies will be mailed directly to the VSO by the vital records office.

***What if the county vital records office does not send the veterans'-use-only copy and application quickly?***

Although county vital records offices did not ask us to make this procedural change, every county vital records office has voiced support for assisting the families of those who have served our country. It is understood that including the Application for Burial Benefits with the certified copy provides much faster service at the VSO. County vital records offices have expectations in place on the timeliness of completing all orders. If there are specific concerns about county timeliness, please contact the state office and we will follow up.

***What if the Veterans' Services Office says they never received the certified copy?***

VSOs, like other recipients, can receive free replacements of certified copies that were lost in the mail. Either the county or the state office will process replacements and attach a copy of the application for burial benefits if it is available from the family or funeral home.



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**Who do I call if I have questions?**

If you have any questions, please contact

Karen Hampton at 971-673-1191 or by email at [Karen.R.Hampton@state.or.us](mailto:Karen.R.Hampton@state.or.us). ❖

**Previous law - 432.080** Copy of vital records furnished without charge for use in proceeding on war veteran's benefits.

Notwithstanding ORS 432.146, the State Registrar of the Center for Health Statistics or the county registrar shall furnish, without charge therefor, a certified copy of a vital record to the United States Department of Veterans Affairs, the Director of Veterans' Affairs or any county service officer appointed under ORS 408.410 **when the record is requested by the agency or officer in connection with, or for use as evidence in, any proceeding involving a claim based upon war veterans' benefits.**

**New law amending ORS 432.146**

(2) The State Registrar of the Center for Health Statistics shall search the system of vital statistics and issue certified copies or other documents, as appropriate, without charge if the search or issuance is:

**(a) Requested in connection with a pending application for benefits from the United States Department of Veterans Affairs, if proof of the application is first submitted;** or

**(b) In response to an administrative error as determined by the state registrar.**

**Want to receive the newsletter by email?**

Notification of newsletter publication and other timely, important vital records information is distributed through an automated email distribution service (listserv). Most funeral homes receive notice of our newsletter through the listserv, but many funeral homes only provide us with one email address for



their facility. If you do not receive email notification of our newsletter directly to your email address, contact the OVERS help desk at 971-673-0297 to request that we add your email address to our list. If you've missed past editions of newsletters, you can access the archive on our website at: <http://public.health.oregon.gov/BirthDeathCertificates/RegisterVitalRecords/Pages/DeathNews.aspx> . ❖

## 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](mailto: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:

Karen Hampton, Cynthia Roeser, Joyce Grant-Worley, Ember Talent, Karen Rangan, JoAnn Jackson, Steven Baird, Jennifer Woodward, Carol Sanders, Kerry Lionadh, and Lynda Jackson.

## We're just a phone call away

Have a question? Try asking one of the helpful CHS staff listed below.

### Frequent Contacts

### CHS Managers

<b>Cause of Death</b> Melissa Franklin 971-673-1144	<b>OVERS Helpdesk</b> 971-673-0279	<b>State Registrar</b> Jennifer Woodward 971-673-1185	<b>OVERS Manager</b> Karen Hampton 971-673-1191
<b>Death Corrections</b> Patty Thompson 971-673-1163		<b>Amendments/Certification Manager</b> Carol Sanders 971-673-1178	<b>Data Processing Supervisor</b> Cynthia Roeser 971-673-0478
		<b>Statistics Manager</b> Joyce Grant-Worley 971-673-1156	<b>Certification Supervisor</b> Karen Rangan 971-673-1182
		<b>Registration Manager</b> JoAnn Jackson 971-673-1160	

## The Center for Health Statistics' office is located at:

800 N.E. Oregon St., Suite 225  
 Portland, OR 97232-2187

Mailing Address: P.O. Box 14050  
 Portland, OR 97293-0050

General Information: 971-673-1180  
 Order Vital Records: 1-888-896-4988

Website: <http://public.health.oregon.gov/PHD/ODPE/CHS>

OVERS website: <http://public.health.oregon.gov/BirthDeathCertificates/RegisterVitalRecords/overs/Pages/index.aspx>

