

## CHIEF OF DETECTIVES

### **NOTICE**

1.8

March 2, 2018

**TO:** All Concerned Personnel

**FROM:** Chief of Detectives

**SUBJECT: PROTOCOLS FOR THE MOVEMENT/TRANSPORT OF A DECEDENT  
DUE TO EXIGENT CIRCUMSTANCES**

The purpose of this Notice is to establish protocols for all Department personnel when encountering a situation that requires the movement/transport of a decedent from a crime scene, prior to the arrival of a Coroner investigator, due to exigent circumstances.

**MOVING THE DECEDENT WITH CORONER'S PERMISSION.** As with any crime scene, the preservation of evidence is of the utmost importance at the scene of a death investigation. It is vital that the remains of a decedent at a crime scene are not tampered with, repositioned, or moved without the approval and direction of a Coroner investigator. Failure to properly protect and manage a crime scene may cause irreparable damage to a criminal investigation.

California Government Code Section 27491.2 (b) states "...the body of one who is known to be dead from any of the causes or under any of the circumstances described in Section 27491 shall not be disturbed or moved from the position or place without the permission of the Coroner or the Coroner's appointed deputy."

The Department and Coroner's Office recognize that the movement of a decedent by Department personnel from a crime scene might be necessary in order to avoid damage to the body or destruction of evidence in extreme and unusual circumstances, such as:

- Acts of nature (e.g., flood, brush fire, mudslide, etc.)
- Tactical situations (e.g., barricaded suspect, active shooter, etc.)
- Imminent destruction of crime scenes (e.g., Due to a lack of on scene personnel, the crime scene will be overwhelmed/overtaken.)

**Note:** The sheer expenditure of operational resources to maintain and manage a crime scene shall not be a deciding factor in the movement/transport of a decedent from a scene.

**MOVING THE DECEDENT WITHOUT CORONER'S PERMISSION.** In some rare cases, exigent circumstances may require the decedent be moved to a secure location prior to contacting the Coroner. This must only be considered when the circumstances are such that the scene cannot reasonably be rendered safe and any delay caused by contacting the Coroner for permission to move the body may result in the imminent loss of the human remains or crucial evidence on the body.

**OFFICER'S RESPONSIBILITIES.** Officers encountering a situation requiring the immediate movement/transport of a decedent without prior approval of the Coroner's Office due to exigent circumstances shall immediately seek approval from their watch commander, and when feasible:

- If equipped, activate all Body Worn Video and Digital In-Car Video systems to record the position of the body, crime scene and all physical evidence;
- Photograph the body in its original state, ensuring that the position of the body in relationship to the surrounding environment is recorded;
- Don protective/latex gloves prior to any contact with the body and/or evidence;
- Consider bagging the decedent's hands to preserve any latent evidence (e.g., gunshot residue (GSR), suspect's DNA, etc.); and,
- Attempt to properly collect all visible evidence.

Officers shall only move/transport the decedent far enough to reach a secure location or a position of safety. Upon reaching a secure location, the Coroner's Office shall be notified and apprised of the circumstances requiring the movement of the decedent.

**WATCH COMMANDER'S RESPONSIBILITIES.** The watch commander who oversees the personnel who made the decision to move the decedent shall ensure the following is completed:

- In all cases when the decedent is moved without the Coroner's permission an Intradepartmental Correspondence, Form 15.02.00, shall be completed articulating the necessity of moving the decedent without the Coroner's prior approval;
- The report shall be approved by the Area Commanding Officer responsible for the movement of the decedent or their designee; and,
- The report shall be forwarded to Detective Bureau.

**AREA COMMANDING OFFICER'S RESPONSIBILITIES.** The Area Commanding Officer shall be responsible for compliance with this Notice.

Should you have any questions regarding this Notice, contact Investigative Analysis Section, Detective Bureau at (213) 486-7000.

APPROVED:



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Chief of Detectives



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DISTRIBUTION "A"