

CHIEF OF DETECTIVES

NOTICE 1.8

March 18, 2025

TO: All Department Personnel

FROM: Chief of Detectives

SUBJECT: SENATE BILL 989 – DOMESTIC VIOLENCE: DEATHS

The purpose of this Notice is to expand upon the information provided in Administrative Order No. 4, *Death Investigation Field Notebook Divider, Form 18.37.01 – Revised*, dated January 7, 2025. Senate Bill (SB) 989 – Domestic Violence: Deaths, which became effective January 1, 2025, added California Penal Code (PC) Section 679.07, delineating requirements for law enforcement action during suspicious death investigation cases that are related to domestic violence. This law accounts for the susceptibility of domestic violence-related death scenes to be staged or altered by the suspect prior to the initial police response and notes that research has identified ten red flag markers in suspicious death cases that should be evaluated in any domestic violence-related death investigation.

Penal Code Section 679.07 states in cases of a deceased individual with an identifiable history of being victimized by domestic violence, law enforcement investigators (patrol officers and/or assigned investigating officers) **shall** interview family members, such as parents, siblings, other close friends or relatives of the decedent with relevant information regarding the history of domestic violence, when **three or more** of the following factors exist:

1. The decedent died prematurely or in an untimely manner.
2. The scene of death gives the appearance of death due to suicide or accident.
3. One partner wanted to end the relationship.
4. There is a history of being victimized by domestic violence that includes coercive control.
5. The decedent is found dead in a home or place of residence.
6. The decedent is found by a current or previous partner.
7. There is a history of being victimized by domestic violence that includes strangulation or suffocation.
8. The current or previous partner, or child of the decedent or decedent's current or previous partner, is the last to see the decedent alive.
9. The partner had control of the scene before law enforcement arrived.
10. The body of the decedent has been moved or the scene or other evidence is altered in some way.

INVESTIGATING OFFICER'S RESPONSIBILITIES. Officers responding to death investigations shall attempt to gather as much of the above information as possible to identify a possible domestic violence related suspicious death before contacting Homicide Detectives. Once a domestic violence related suspicious death is identified, investigators shall ensure family members are interviewed at least once during the course of the investigation to gather pertinent information prior to making any findings as to the cause and manner of death.

Additionally, PC Section 679.07 allows law enforcement investigators to request a complete autopsy pursuant to Section 27521 of the Government Code in a case where investigators have determined there is an identifiable history of domestic violence victimization and any of the above-mentioned conditions are present.

Senate Bill 989 also makes a couple amendments. First, the bill amends Section 129 of the Code of Civil Procedure, which authorizes a family member in addition to a legal heir or representative of the deceased, to request from the coroner a copy of any kind of photograph or video recording. The copies must be for use or potential use in a civil action or proceeding that relates to the death of that person.

Secondly, the bill amends Government Code Section 27491, which expands the duty of the coroner in domestic violence related suspicious deaths. In such cases, the coroner may conduct the inquiry in consultation with a board-certified forensic pathologist.

If you have any questions, please contact the Domestic Violence Coordinator, Detective Bureau, at (213) 486-7000.

APPROVED:

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'A. Hamilton'.

ALAN S. HAMILTON, Deputy Chief
Chief of Detectives

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'T. Harrelson'.

T. SCOTT HARRELSON, Deputy Chief
Chief of Staff
Office of the Chief of Police

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