

OSAC PROPOSED STANDARD
2026-N-1011
Standard for Minimum
Resources for a Medicolegal
Death Investigation Authority

Medicolegal Death Investigation Subcommittee
Medicine Scientific Area Committee (SAC)
Organization of Scientific Area Committees (OSAC) for Forensic Science



Draft OSAC Proposed Standard

OSAC 2026-N-1011 Standard for Minimum Resources for a Medicolegal Death Investigation Authority

Prepared by
Medicolegal Death Investigation Subcommittee
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This OSAC Proposed Standard has completed an open comment period and a rigorous technical and quality review by the originating OSAC unit (e.g., subcommittee), their parent body (e.g., scientific area committee), and the OSAC Standards Review Panel.

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1 **Foreword**

2 Medicolegal death investigation systems are responsible for conducting death investigations and
3 certifying the cause and manner of death. Medicolegal death investigation is a highly specialized
4 and vital function, accomplished in collaboration with public health and public safety. It requires
5 access to and possession of supplies and equipment, professionals and services, and
6 infrastructure for daily operations. This document is designed for use by medicolegal death
7 investigators, coroners, and medical examiners and may serve as a reference for law
8 enforcement agencies, the legal community, the medical community, public health officials,
9 government officials, and the public at large to define the minimum resources for medicolegal
10 death investigation.

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Keywords: coroner, death investigation, forensic pathologist, medical examiner, medicolegal death investigation, medicolegal death investigator

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36 **Standard for Minimum Resources for a Medicolegal Death Investigation Authority**

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38 **1 Scope**

39 This document outlines a minimum list of resources needed for daily operations by a medicolegal
40 death investigation authority in order to conduct medicolegal death investigations. It does not
41 include a comprehensive list of all available resources or address specialized or mass fatality
42 incidents. Mass fatality and specialized recovery incidents may require additional resources.

43

44 **2 Normative References**

45 AAFS Standards Board. (2021). ANSI/ASB Standard 125 (1st ed.): Organizational and
46 foundational standard for medicolegal death investigation. AAFS Standards Board.
47 https://www.aafs.org/sites/default/files/media/documents/125_Std_e1.pdf

48 **3 Terms and Definitions**

49 For purposes of this document, the following terms and definitions apply.

50 **3.1**

51 **certified medicolegal death investigator**

52 Medicolegal death investigator who has completed the requirements for Certification (Registry
53 or Board) by an accredited credentialing body; currently, the American Board of Medicolegal
54 Death Investigators

55

56 **3.2**

57 **Coroner**

58 An elected or appointed official responsible for overseeing medicolegal death investigations,
59 usually for a single county, and for certifying the cause and manner of death in these
60 investigations; duties vary based on local enabling statutes

61

62 **3.3**

63 **decedent**

64 Deceased person or any suspected human remains

65

66 **3.4**

67 **external evaluation**

68 Physical assessment of the decedent by a medicolegal death investigator

69

70 **3.5**

71 **forensic pathologist**

72 Physician who is board-certified in forensic pathology by an accredited credentialing body;
73 currently the American Board of Pathology and American Osteopathic Board of Pathology

74

75

76 **3.6**

77 **Jurisdiction**

78 (1) Legal authority to make legal decisions and judgments regarding a death, including
79 performance of autopsy, as well as investigation and certification of cause and manner of death.

80 (2) Geographic area in which a medical examiner or coroner’s authority applies

81 **3.7**

82 **medical examiner**

83 Appointed forensic pathologist whose duty is to oversee medicolegal death investigations,
84 perform postmortem examinations, and certify cause and manner of death. In some jurisdictions,
85 individuals with other qualifications hold the title “Medical Examiner”, but for purposes of this
86 document those individuals are considered medicolegal death investigators

87 **3.8**

88 **medicolegal death investigation**

89 Formal inquiry into the circumstances surrounding the death of a human being; investigative
90 information is considered with autopsy findings and adjunctive studies (if performed) to
91 determine the cause and manner of death

92 **3.9**

93 **medicolegal death investigation authority**

94 Person or persons whose duty it is to perform medicolegal death investigations for a designated
95 jurisdiction, and ensure certification of cause and manner of death; duties vary based on local
96 enabling statutes

97 **3.10**

98 **medicolegal death investigator**

99 Individual who performs medicolegal death investigations, and includes those who have not
100 completed the requirements for certification and is not certified

101 **3.11**

102 **Scene**

103 Location(s) at which scene examinations and external evaluations occur, to include both the
104 death scene and incident scene

105 **4 Requirements for Medicolegal Death Investigations**

106 The following resources, including personnel, space/facilities, data infrastructure, and funding,
107 shall be provided by the jurisdiction to medicolegal death investigation authorities to meet the
108 needs of medicolegal death investigations.

109 Medicolegal death investigation authorities shall be provided with the following resources,
110 including personnel, space, data infrastructure, and funding to meet the needs of medicolegal
111 death investigations. All required equipment shall be functional and properly maintained, with
112 batteries or other power source as applicable. The specific equipment utilized shall be
113 commensurate with the physical environment, geography, and weather conditions of the

120 jurisdiction. Supplies shall be stocked in sufficient quantity to ensure timely availability and
121 prevent reuse of single-use disposable items and stored in a climate-controlled environment.
122 Access to a resource indicates its use as specified in Standard ANSI/ASB 125.

123

124 **4.1** Materials and Items

- 125 ● Identification documents (credentials)
- 126 ● Scene bag or carrying case
- 127 ● Personal protective equipment (PPE)
 - 128 ○ Single-use, disposable protective suit
 - 129 ○ Single-use, disposable examination gloves
 - 130 ○ Single-use, disposable face masks
 - 131 ○ Face and eye protection (e.g. disposable face shield, safety glasses)
 - 132 ○ Hair cover
 - 133 ○ Disposable shoe covers
 - 134 ○ Reflective vest
 - 135 ○ Cut-resistant work gloves
- 136 ● Digital camera with storage device (e.g. SD card)
- 137 ● Photo scale
- 138 ● Navigation aids (maps, compass, and/or GPS)
- 139 ● Tape measure
- 140 ● Flashlight / portable scene lighting
- 141 ● Digital, ambient air thermometer
- 142 ● Fingerprint identification materials (ink, powder or digital with associated
143 tools)
- 144 ● Reenactment doll
- 145 ● Body bags/body pouches
- 146 ● Decedent identification tags
- 147 ● Utility knife or multitool
- 148 ● Personal effects and evidence recovery materials

- 149 ○ Biohazard waste bags
- 150 ○ Biohazard specimen bags
- 151 ○ Paper evidence bags (various sizes)
- 152 ○ Tamper-evident evidence tape
- 153 ○ Tamper-evident/self-locking seals or nylon cable ties
- 154 ● Departmental forms for data collection and documentation during
155 medicolegal death investigation, or electronic equivalent (including backup
156 resources)
- 157 ○ Initial death notification form
- 158 ○ Scene investigation form
- 159 ○ Property / Evidence receipt form
- 160 ○ Identification form
- 161 ○ Supplemental investigation forms/logs
- 162 ● Office Supplies:
- 163 ○ Writing instruments
- 164 ○ Permanent markers
- 165 ○ Notepad
- 166 ○ Stapler
- 167 ○ Paper clips
- 168 ● Personal supplies:
- 169 ○ Department-approved attire
- 170 ○ Outerwear, as local weather conditions would dictate

171 **4.1.1** Professionals

- 172 ● ABMDI (or equivalent) certified medicolegal death investigator(s)
- 173 ● Access to board-certified forensic pathologist(s) and necessary consultants
174 (e.g. cardiac pathologist, neuropathologist, pediatric pathologist)
- 175 ● Access to board-certified forensic anthropologist
- 176 ● Access to board-certified forensic odontologist

- 177 ● Access to language interpretation services, to include hearing impaired
178 assistance
- 179 ● Access to legal counsel for guidance on the execution of governmental /
180 departmental orders, directives, and policy
- 181 ● Access to certified forensic science service providers (e.g., crime lab,
182 histology, toxicology)
- 183 ● Access to certified resources for identification of decedents (e.g.
184 local/state/federal law enforcement AFIS, DNA lab)
- 185 ● Access to personnel with self-contained breathing apparatus (SCBA)
186 training and equipment
- 187 ● Access to a medical provider for periodic health assessment (e.g. new
188 employee immunizations, tuberculosis (TB) testing, respiratory fit tests)

189 **4.1.2 Infrastructure**

- 190 ● Computer
- 191 ● Computerized case management system with secure means of data transfer
- 192 ● Printer/copier/scanner/fax equipment
- 193 ● Internet access, reliable high-speed internet where available, to include for
194 use on scene/remotely
- 195 ● Cellular phone/communication equipment
- 196 ● Access to response vehicle(s), suitable for scene investigation as scene and
197 local weather conditions dictate
- 198 ● Access to office vehicle(s) or mortuary transport service suitable for the
199 transportation of human remains with transportation cot and/or backboard
- 200 ● Secure refrigerated storage for human remains and biospecimen with
201 appropriate ventilation for vapor and odor control
- 202 ● Secure storage area for property, medications, controlled substances, and
203 any other evidence
- 204 ● Access to an accredited autopsy location with the necessary equipment to
205 perform professional services and ancillary testing

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210 **ANNEX**
211 **(Informative)**

212
213 **Bibliography**

214
215 This is not meant to be an all-inclusive list as the group recognizes other publications on this
216 subject may exist. At the time these standards were drafted, these were the publications
217 available to the working group members for reference. Additionally, any mention of a particular
218 software tool or vendor as part of this bibliography is purely incidental, and any inclusion does
219 not imply endorsement by the authors of this document.

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