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What types of deaths must a coroner investigate?

California coroners have an affirmative duty to **inquire and determine the circumstances, manner and cause** of all violent, sudden or unusual deaths; unattended deaths and deaths where the deceased has not been seen by a physician in the 20 days before death.

Certain Death Types

The law also lists certain types of death that **require** coroner investigation. The coroner must inquire and determine the circumstances, manner and cause of death when any of these types of death are suspected:

- 1 - Suicides
- 2 - Homicides
- 3 - Criminal abortions
- 4 - Criminal means (caused by)
- 5 - Rape
- 6 - Sexual Assault
- 7 - Accidental Poisonings
- 8 - Accidental deaths or those caused by accidental injury
- 9 - Drownings
- 10 - Fire
- 11 - Hanging
- 12 - Gunshot
- 13 - Stabbing
- 14 - Cutting
- 15 - Exposure
- 16 - Starvation
- 17 - Acute alcoholism
- 18 - Drug addiction
- 19 - Strangulation
- 20 - Aspiration
- 21 - Sudden infant death syndrome (suspected)
- 22 - Contagious diseases (public hazard)

Certain Locations

If death occurs, even a "natural death", in one of these places a coroner investigation is required to determine the circumstances, manner and cause of death:

- 1 - Jail
- 2 - Prison
- 3 - In-custody (while under sentence)
- 4 - Mental health hospitals operated by the State
- 5 - State hospitals serving the developmentally disabled

Source: Cal. Govt. Code Section 27491

So in simple terms, the coroner investigates and reports **manner and cause of death** in many common scenarios. So you may ask "**When does a coroner not get involved?**" Well often times a coroner is not involved when a person has a terminal illness (e.g. cancer) and dies in a local hospital, or when a person is elderly and is under physician care and dying naturally from age related organ failure (while under hospice care).

What if you suspect a wrongful or accidental death and you find out that the coroner is not involved? For example, your deceased loved one is being transported direct to a mortuary, funeral home or crematory and a physician is signing the death certificate. In that case, you must act fast. You may need to hire a wrongful death lawyer and seek coroner intervention, and, if necessary, consider

whether an independent autopsy is needed to determine cause and manner of death. Failure to notify the coroner's office and/or the mortuary, funeral home or crematory timely may result in the failure to secure evidence needed to prove a wrongful death case.

Crime to Move Body

It is a misdemeanor to move a deceased person's body from its place of death if the death is one of the types or locations referenced above. In other words, the coroner should be able to acquire the body of your loved one from the exact location where he or she died. See Cal. Govt. Code Section 27491.2(b).

As you might suspect, the exact location of death may provide the coroner clues as to the cause and manner of death and this is why the law requires that the body remain in the place of death until the coroner arrives.

Attorney Richard Harris is the principal of Rich Harris, A Law Corporation located in Riverside, California.

His practice is dedicated to helping individuals and families pursue their wrongful death claims. Mr. Harris has been serving wrongful death heirs in all 58 California counties for over 20 years.

Call today to see if Mr. Harris can help you with your case. Mr. Harris can be reached at (888) 660-4529 or by visiting:
<https://calwrongfuldeathlawyer.com/>