

The Role of the Medical Examiner: Death and Public Health

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About the Erie County Medical Examiner's Office

- Over 2600 reported deaths
- Around 1200 cases
(autopsies/exams/etc)
- Tox & Histo:
 - 50% of cases complete by 30 days
 - 80% of cases complete by 60 days
 - 99% of cases complete by 90 days

HE WAS INVOLVED IN SOME SORT
OF BAKING ACCIDENT... WE'RE
CALLING HIM JOHN DOUGH...

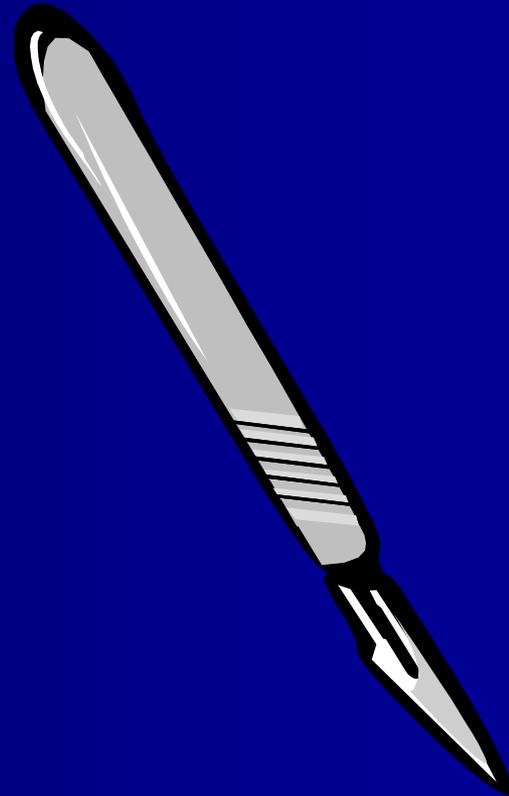


About the Erie County Medical Examiner's Office

■ Who works there?

- Administrative
 - Admin. Coordinator
 - Clerical Staff
- Forensic Pathologists
 - Chief Medical Examiner
 - Assoc. Chief Medical Examiners
- Forensic Toxicologists
 - Chief County Toxicologist
 - Toxicologists
- Investigators
 - Medical Investigators
 - Scene Investigators
 - **Morgue Keepers**
- Histologist
- Pathological Lab Assistants

■ Law Enforcement/DAs/Ancillary/Forensic Scientists



Medicolegal Death Investigation

Medicolegal Death Investigation: Jurisdiction

Notification of Death

ME Jurisdiction

Not ME Jurisdiction

Scene/Background
Investigation

Ancillary Tests

Forensic Autopsy

Investigation Report

Certification of Death

Medicolegal Death Investigation

- The purpose of the investigation is to determine:
 - Who?
 - What?
 - When?
 - Where?
 - Why?
 - How?



Medicolegal Death Investigation: Components

- Scene Investigation
- Background Investigation
- Ancillary Studies
 - Toxicology
 - Radiology
 - Clinical Labs
 - Others

Medicolegal Death Investigation

- These investigations put together a story and timeline of the last years, months, days and hours of an individual's life
- This "story" is taken into consideration during the autopsy



AUTOPSY ROOM



Forensic or Medicolegal Autopsy

- The purpose of the autopsy is to establish the cause and manner of death through the:
 - Documentation of internal and external injuries
 - Collection of medical evidence such as tissues, fluids and trace evidence
 - Reconstruction of the injuries



Does this all correspond??

Goal of Medical Examiner's Office:

Certification of Death

(AKA: Death Certificate)

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“Cause of death is still unknown. We hope to learn more once he’s dead.”

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Death Certificate – Who Issues It?

- Physician/Doctor
- Medical Examiner



Death Certificate- What Does It Show?

- Identifies the individual
- States the Cause and Manner of death
 - Cause – what actually caused the person to die, i.e. heart attack
 - Manner – 5 types:
 - Natural
 - Accident
 - Homicide
 - Suicide
 - Undetermined

Death Certificate-Why Is It Important?

- Closure for family
- Settling of estates/insurance, etc.
- Cause and Manner
 - Legal – criminal and civil litigation
 - Public Health

Epidemiology & Disease (Death) Prevention

- H1N1
- Myocarditis
- Co-Sleeping
- Cancer Registry
- DMV Reports

Mass Fatality And Pandemic Disease Planning

Basics:

- Structure
- Flexibility
- All-Hazards

Mass Fatality Plan

- COOP (Continuity of Operations Plan)
- MERT (Medical Examiner's Response Team)
- Forms
- Phases

Additions Specific to Flight 3407

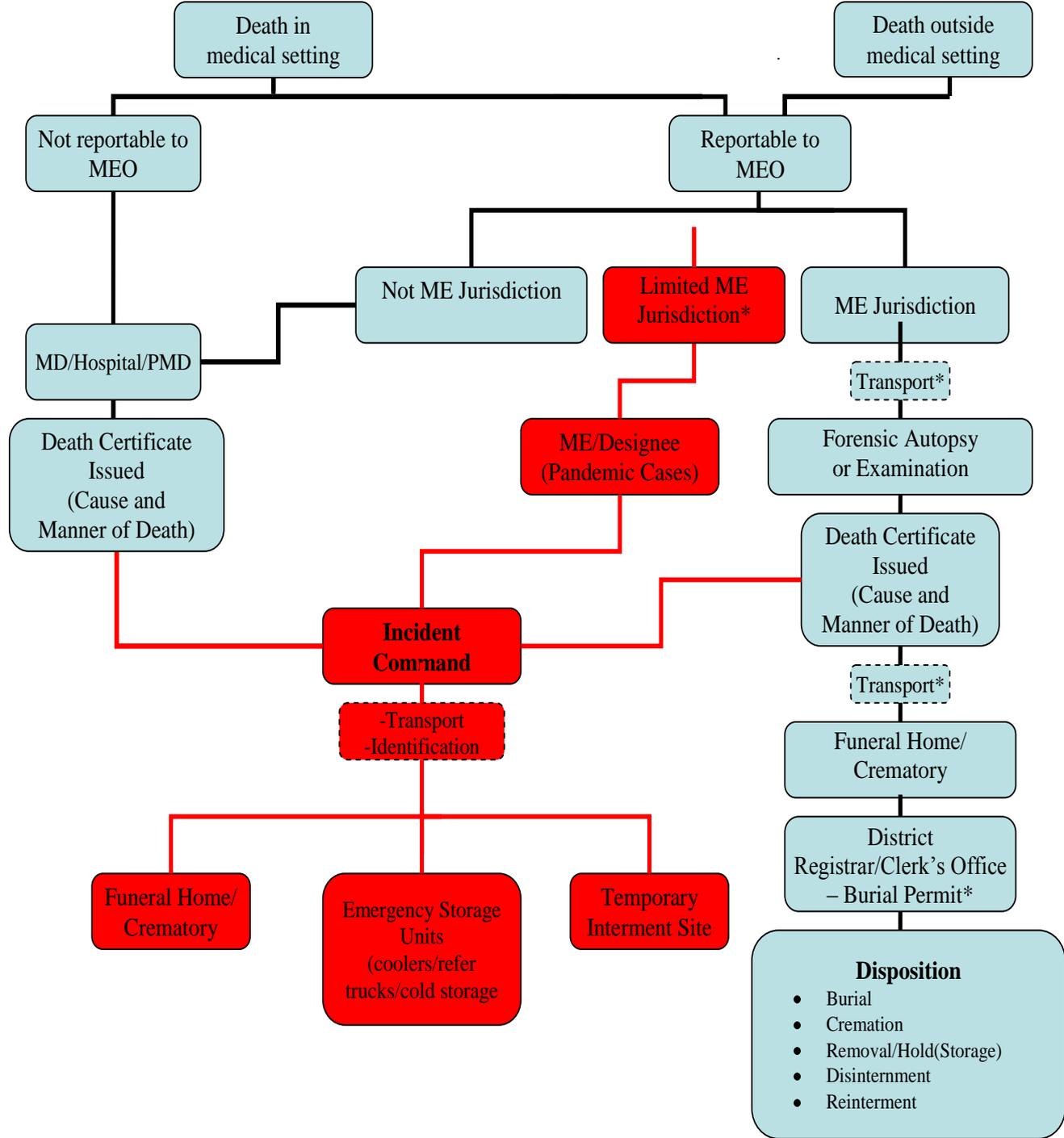
- COOP
 - External Assistance
- MERT
 - Designated Staff
 - Family
 - Office
 - Scene
 - External Assistance
 - Numbering System
- Forms
 - DMORT (Disaster Mortuary Response Team)
- Phases
 - III

Lessons Learned

- Updates to the ECMEO Mass Fatality Plan
 - Family Assistance Designee
 - MERT Office Division
 - Additional Phase

Pandemic Disease Plan

- Jurisdiction
- Autopsy
- Reporting
- PPE/Employee Prophylaxis
- Decontamination



Additions Specific to H1N1

- Jurisdiction
 - After Sentinel Cases, most not ME
 - Confirmed /suspected cases of H1N1, not ME
- Autopsy – 4 H1N1, 1 Influenza A
 - Only Sentinel Cases and unconfirmed
- Reporting
 - All samples sent to NYS Lab at Wadsworth
- PPE/Employee Prophylaxis
 - CDC Guidelines utilized at all times
- Decontamination
 - CDC Guidelines utilized at all times

Lessons Learned

- Updates to the ECMEOP Pandemic Disease Plan
 - Definition of Sentinel Case
 - CDC Guidelines

QUESTIONS????????

Erie County Medical Examiner's Office
503 Kensington Ave. (ECMC Campus)
961-7591

How can you be involved?

- Interns - ECMEO offers internships to college students
- Volunteers - Specialized Medical Assistance Response Team (SMART)
 - www.erie.gov/health/smart

THANK YOU!!!

