

WSDOT



Pierce County

Medical Examiner's Office

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Chief Medical Examiner

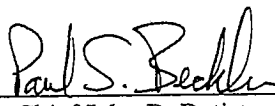
ROBERTO B. RAMOSO, M.D.
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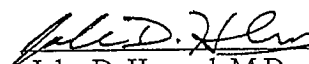
Guidelines for Off-Site Removal of Deceased Persons at Collisions

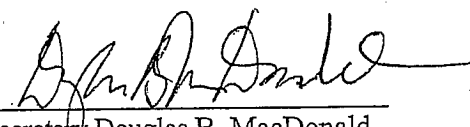
Fatality traffic collisions frequently result in long road closures affecting thousands of motorists. When a fatality occurs at a traffic collision, it is considered to be a crime scene and the appropriate law enforcement agency conducts a collision investigation and the county medical examiner conducts a death investigation. During these investigations, it is important to balance the need to conduct thorough investigations with the need to respect the dignity and privacy of the deceased and the deceased's family. It is also important to prevent on-lookers from viewing the deceased whenever possible, to restore the flow of traffic as soon as possible, and to provide for the safety of the investigators. The Washington State Patrol, Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT), and Pierce County Medical Examiner recognize that there are times when extraction of deceased victims trapped inside vehicles is best accomplished at another location out of public view. In these cases, transporting the vehicle to another location maintains the privacy and dignity of the victim and the victim's family, provides a safer environment for Fire/EMS/Rescue responders and investigators to perform the extrication, and expedites reopening the roadway.

THEREFORE: When off-site extrication of remains is a possibility, we have agreed to the following guidelines:

1. Law enforcement has jurisdiction over the scene, including the vehicle and its general contents. The medical examiner has jurisdiction over the body of the deceased and the clothing and personal items immediately on the body of the deceased. The decision to remove a vehicle with a deceased inside for off-site extrication will be a mutual decision between the incident commander(s) and the medical investigator representing the Pierce County Medical Examiner's Office at the scene.
2. If the vehicle is to be removed, WSDOT Incident Response personnel will securely tarp the vehicle to ensure the human remains are not visible and that no evidence and/or property is lost during transport.
3. The vehicle will be transported on a flatbed transport vehicle to a mutually agreeable location/facility out of public view for extraction.
4. During transport, the medical investigator (and investigating officer(s) if appropriate) will follow the transporting vehicle to the off-site location/facility to preserve the chain of evidence.
5. After the deceased has been removed from the vehicle, the investigating law enforcement agency will assume control of the vehicle for evidentiary and disposition purposes.


Chief John R. Batiste
Washington State Patrol
Date: 12-7-06


John D. Howard, M.D.
Pierce County
Medical Examiner
December 1, 2006


Secretary Douglas B. MacDonald
Department of Transportation
Date: 12/13/06