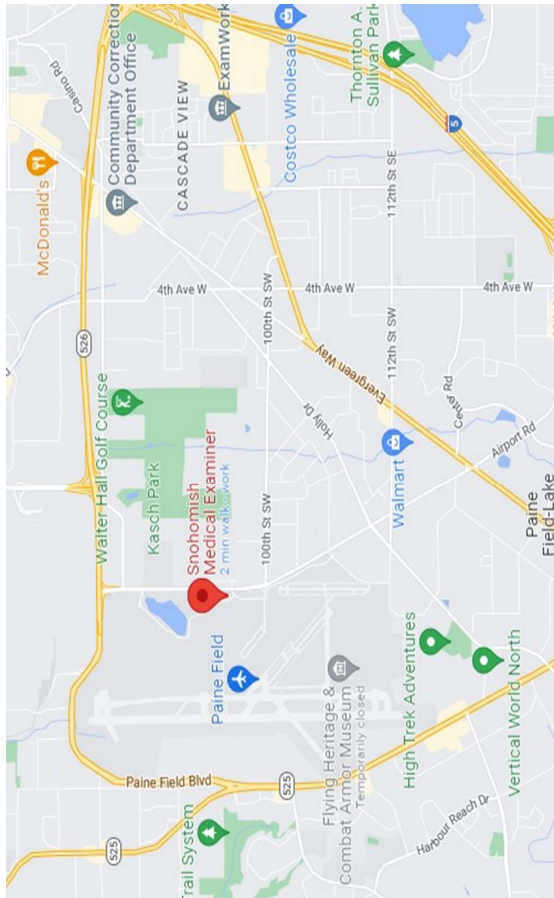


We are located near Paine Field off Airport Rd. and 100<sup>th</sup> St. SW.



**Snohomish County Medical Examiner's Office**  
9509 29<sup>th</sup> Ave West  
Everett, WA 98204

Please visit additional links on our website for more information including local funeral homes & crematoriums in our county, bereavement support services, biohazard cleanup services, body donation services, veteran compensation assistance, media releases, and other resources.

**Telephone: 425-438-6200**  
**Fax: 425-438-6222**

**Office Hours:**  
Monday-Friday 09:00 AM to 4:00 PM  
Office closed on Legal Holidays.

**An investigator is on-call to answer phone calls 24/7.**



**Snohomish County**

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**Medical Examiner's Office**

***Information Guide  
and FAQ***

At the Snohomish County Medical Examiner's Office we believe in providing comprehensive, impartial, and scientific death investigations. We hope to provide closure to the families, instill community trust, and enhance public health and safety.

This pamphlet was designed to help answer some of your questions, explain why we are involved, and what happens next.

**Why did the Medical Examiner's Office respond?**

The Medical Examiner's Office investigates all sudden, unexpected/unexplained, traumatic, or suspicious deaths. The job of the Medical Examiner's Office is to perform a comprehensive, impartial, and scientific investigation of the scene and circumstances.

**What happens now?**

The investigator on scene will take photographs, conduct interviews, and gather vital information. The investigator will transport your loved one to the Snohomish County Medical Examiner's Office where they will be seen and examined by the Medical Examiner.

**When does the exam take place?**

Exams are usually done the following business day (M-F). If there is going to be a delay, someone from our office will update you with a more accurate timetable. Your loved one will usually be ready to be released to a funeral home the same day as the exam or the following day.

**What should I do next?**

The legal next of kin should begin making arrangements with a funeral home, cremation service, or other organization. The Medical Examiner's Office cannot assist or provide recommendations for a funeral home but can offer information on resources. If you are having issues or concerns, please call our office.

**Can I do a viewing at the Medical Examiner's Office?**

No. Our office is NOT equipped to do viewings under any circumstances. Viewings may take place at a funeral home of your choice after the autopsy at the discretion of the funeral home.

**Who is the legal next of kin?**

The State Law (RCW 68.50.160) defines next of kin in this order: 1) spouse, 2) adult children, 3) parents, 4) siblings. A court-appointed power of attorney, legal guardian, or most responsible party may also be allowed to act as next of kin in certain circumstances. Washington State does not recognize common law marriage. Please inform us if there are complications with the next of kin's ability to choose a funeral home.

**How do I find out the cause of death?**

After the exam has been completed, someone from our office will contact you with preliminary or final results. Some cases may be listed as "pending" if toxicology or additional tests need to be reviewed. The timetable for toxicology returns are variable. However, please allow at LEAST 2-3 months for the pathologist to receive test results and make a cause of death determination. A "pending" cause of death does not prohibit the release of your loved one from our office or delay the death certificate. If the cause of death is "pending", our office will call the next of kin once the cause of death has been finalized.

**How do I get a copy of the autopsy/post-mortem report and/or toxicology report?**

Please see our website or call our office for instructions to obtain a copy of an autopsy/post-mortem report and/or toxicology report. A small fee is collected for the report, and we will need a copy of a valid photo ID. These records are different from a death certificate.

**How do I get a copy of a death certificate?**

The Snohomish County Medical Examiner's Office does not issue death certificates. There are two ways to obtain certified death certificates:

1. Contact your chosen funeral home / crematory
2. Contact Snohomish County Vital Statistics. The phone number for their office is (425) 339-5290.

For pending cases, a death certificate with a "pending" cause of death can be obtained if needed. An updated death certificate will be created once a final cause of death is determined. Please allow 1-2 weeks after the final cause of death is determined to request a finalized death certificate.

**What happens to my loved one's property?**

An investigator will do their best to release all property to the next of kin on scene or have it secured on scene. If next of kin is not on scene or the property is pertinent to the investigation, we will take it back to our office where it will be inventoried and secured. The property will then go to the funeral home of your choice upon their release. The next of kin also has the option to come to the Medical Examiner's Office to pick up their loved one's property if necessary.

**Can I refuse an autopsy?**

Washington State law does not recognize a right to refuse an autopsy ordered by the Medical Examiner. However, we recognize that your family or religious beliefs may potentially conflict with performing an autopsy. We are open to discussion to accommodate your wishes, as long as we can fulfill the legal obligation presented by the circumstances of the situation.