

DEATH REGISTRATION

For inquiries on filing a death certificate electronically, please call Vital Statistics at (208) 334-5989 for assistance.

I. GENERAL INFORMATION

A. Filing Requirement

A Certificate of Death must be filed for each death occurring or body found within this state by the person in charge of interment or of removal of the body from the district. The certificate is to be filed with the Local Registrar of the district (county) in which the death occurred or the body was found, or as otherwise directed by the State Registrar, within 5 days after the date of death.

The current version (at the time of death or discovery of death) of the [Idaho Certificate of Death](#) is to be completed and filed. A certificate that is prepared on an improper form, is a photo or carbon copy, or is defaced will not be accepted. All items must be completed or the reason for their omission explained. If the response to an individual question can not be determined or acquired by the informant or the certifier, "unknown" should be indicated in the space provided for the item. Certificates that are incomplete or contain improper or inconsistent data will be rejected.

Once the Local Registrar has accepted a certificate for filing, the original death certificate is to be forwarded by the Local Registrar immediately* to **Vital Statistics** in the supplied postage-paid envelopes. A copy of the certificate shall be retained by the Local Registrar for 3 years. (*Local issuance sites may hold the death certificate up to 5 working days.)

When the cause and/or manner of death are not yet known, a death certificate must still be filed within 5 days after the date of death. The certificate should be marked as "Pending Investigation" in Manner of Death - Item 31 and/or, Pending, entered in Cause of Death - Item 27. The certifier must provide the medical information as soon as it is available by completing and filing a Supplemental Information Form with Vital Statistics.

The mortician or person acting as such must submit a completed [24-Hour Report of Death](#) (pink; page 3) to the Local Registrar of the county where death occurred within 24 hours after taking possession of the body.

The [24-Hour Report of Death](#) is a notification to the Local Registrar that a death has occurred. The information in the report should be utilized by the Local Registrar to ensure that a Certificate of Death is received for each reported death.

It is the responsibility of the Local Registrar to obtain a certificate for every death that has occurred or body found in his or her registration district (county). The death notices and articles printed in the local newspaper are a good source of this information. If a death certificate has not been filed after 2 weeks from the date of death or finding, the status of the certificate and all follow up steps that have been taken should be reported to **Vital Statistics**.

The Local Registrars should know the funeral facility staff that file death certificates in their county and assist them with problems which they may encounter in obtaining signatures on the medical portion of the death certificates. Physicians, physician assistants, advanced practice professional nurses and coroners should be encouraged to sign death certificates promptly. Follow up is sometimes necessary to obtain those signatures. Habitual and/or extreme tardiness should be reported to **Vital Statistics**.

B. Purpose

Proof of facts about the death of an individual is important for:

- Insurance claims (life, accident, mortgage, etc.)
- Pension claims
- Veteran's benefits
- Social Security benefits
- Settling of estates
- Property rights (clearing titles)
- Genealogy (tracing ancestry)
- Show relationship (husband, wife, parent)
- Cause of death information
- Age/date of birth of the deceased
- General legal use

Statistical uses such as:

- Public health planning
- Research

C. Unreported Deaths

If a Local Registrar should learn of a death, from a local newspaper or other source, that has not been reported (no certificate or 24-hour report has been received), he or she should immediately contact the mortician or other person in charge of internment or removal of the body. Some research may need to be done to determine whom to contact. Any problems encountered in obtaining a complete certificate should be referred to the State Registrar.

D. Deaths Occurring in a Moving Conveyance

Deaths occurring in a moving conveyance are to be registered in the district (county) where the body was first removed from the conveyance. A common situation occurs when an injured person is placed in an ambulance and, according to the attendants, dies before the ambulance crosses the county or state line. The place of death is recorded as the place where the person was first removed from the conveyance.

E. Late and Delayed Death Registration

The Local Registrar may accept for registration a [Certificate of Death](#) within 1 year of the date of death. Deaths must be filed on the current version (at the time of death) of the certificate. Any certificate received 1 year or more after death must be forwarded directly to **Vital Statistics** without being signed by the Local Registrar.

All deaths registered 1 year or more after the date of death or finding of the body are to be registered with the State Registrar as delayed filings. All inquiries and correspondence regarding registration of deaths 1 year or more after the date of death must be referred to **Vital Statistics**.

The procedure followed by **Vital Statistics** in handling delayed death registration is found in [Idaho Code §39-278](#) and in the departmental rules ([IDAPA 16.02.08.651](#)).

F. Correction of Death Certificates

1. Filed with the Local Registrar and certificate is in their possession.

The funeral facility can make a change/correction to the death certificate after it has been filed with the Local Registrar as long as the certificate is still in the possession of the Local Registrar. The certificate may be returned to the funeral facility to make the change/correction along with instructions to return the certificate to the Local Registrar immediately after the correction is made.

The Local Registrar should make a copy of that death certificate for their file and make sure that the certificate or a replacement is returned to them within a short time. A copy of the corrected certificate should be made and placed in the Local Registrar's completed certificate file.

If certified copies of the death certificate have been issued locally, all certified copies must be returned to the Local Deputy State Registrar before the death certificate is to be returned to the funeral facility for correction. If all copies are not returned for any reason, the death certificate must be sent to **Vital Statistics** and the correction must be made with **Vital Statistics**.

2. Filed with Vital Statistics

A person wishing to correct a death certificate that has been registered with Vital Statistics should work with the funeral facility responsible for filing the certificate or be referred to **Vital Statistics at (208) 334-5990**.

Note: A sample of the correction affidavit is in the [Special Forms](#) section.

AN ITEM CAN BE CORRECTED ONLY ONE TIME

Once an item has been amended, it cannot be amended again except upon receipt of a court order from an Idaho Court. The procedure followed by Vital Statistics in handling court ordered amendments is found in [Idaho Code §39-278](#).

---- The requirements for correcting a death certificate are as follows:

(Please note: The following instructions do not apply in all cases, depending on circumstances and/or any previous actions taken.)

Less than one year from the date of the event:

An incorrect item on a Certificate of Death may be amended with a completed correction affidavit. The affidavit must:

- (1) identify the certificate to be corrected,
- (2) include the incorrect information as it is listed on the certificate,
- (3) state the correct information as it should appear.

Documentation supporting the requested correction may be required in some cases.

The correction affidavit must be signed by the next of kin, informant, funeral director who signed the death certificate, or the certifier (depending on the item[s] to be corrected and the circumstances), and their signature must be notarized.

- Corrections to the demographic section (top) can be signed by either the informant, the next of kin (closest in degree of kinship), or the funeral director who signed the death certificate. **Please Note:** If the funeral director who signed the death certificate is no longer available, the informant or the next of kin will need to sign the affidavit. A different funeral director cannot sign for the correction.
- Corrections to the decedent's marital status must, in most cases, be signed by the informant.
- All corrections to the medical section including the date of death must be signed by the certifier.

More than one year from the date of the event:

A completed [correction affidavit](#) (as noted above in the instructions for less than one year) is required, along with one or more documents that support the requested amendment.

G. Authorization for Final Disposition and Cremation Authorization

An "[Authorization for Final Disposition](#)" (blue; page 2) must accompany the body to the place of final disposition.

The mortician or person acting as such who first assumes possession of a dead body must obtain all authorizations for final disposition prior to final disposal or removal of the body from Idaho. The mortician or person acting as such must sign the form attesting that they obtained all authorizations necessary to authorize the final disposition of the body.

If the body is to be transported out-of-state the Authorization for Final Disposition must be signed by the person responsible for certifying the cause of death.

If the coroner is the person responsible for certifying the cause of death they must also sign the Authorization for Final Disposition.

If the body is to be cremated the Authorization for Final Disposition must be signed by the person responsible for certifying the cause of death. An **ADDITIONAL** authorization to allow the procedure must also be obtained from the coroner prior to the cremation of the remains.

If the body is to be buried, entombed, or donated within the state of Idaho and the cause of death was certified by a physician, physician assistant, or advanced practice professional nurse, only the mortician's signature is necessary for final disposition.

Any shipment of a body out of the country may require special procedures. The mortician should check with the appropriate consulate for current requirements. If an apostille is needed the mortician should contact the Idaho Secretary of State's office and Vital Statistics for information. A letter may occasionally be required stating that no contagious disease was present. This letter may be obtained from the Local Deputy State Registrar at the health district where Local Issuance copies are obtained or from **Vital Statistics**.

H. Transportation of Bodies Into the State

A dead body transported into a registration district for disposal from out of state must be accompanied by a transit permit issued according to the laws and rules of the place where the death occurred.

The out-of-state transit permit will be accepted by the sexton of the cemetery or by the crematory

official as authorization for burial or other disposal in Idaho.

I. Presumed Death -- Body Cannot Be Located

A court order from an Idaho Court is required for the State Registrar to place a death certificate on file when a death is presumed to have occurred within this state but the body cannot be located. A certified copy of the court order must be received by the State Registrar and must include the information (finding of facts) required to complete the death certificate.

The death certificate will be marked "Presumptive", will show the date of registration, and will identify the court and the date of the decree.

There is no fee for preparing and filing a presumptive death certificate.

The length of time before an order can be obtained is dependant upon the circumstances and evidence of presumed death and the ruling of the court.

A Certificate of Death must be filed when human remains are found that provides the facts of death. If it is determined that the remains are of a person who has had a presumptive death certificate previously placed on file, the presumptive death certificate will be removed from file at **Vital Statistics** and replaced with the Certificate of Death.

II. REVIEW AND SCREENING

A. General Guidelines

The Certificate of Death must be legibly completed with permanent non-fading black ink, using a typewriter with good ribbon and type surface, using a computer printer with high resolution, or by very neatly hand printing. Certificates completed in other colored ink or pencil is not acceptable except for dark blue ink handwritten in the medical section.

Signatures appearing on the death certificate must be personally signed in black or dark blue ink; other colored ink, pencil, rubber stamps, or facsimile signatures are not acceptable.

The current version (at the time of death or discovery of death) of the [Idaho Certificate of Death](#) is to be completed and filed. A certificate that is prepared on an improper form, is a photo or carbon copy, or is defaced will not be accepted. All items must be completed or the reason for their omission explained. If the response to an individual question can not be determined or acquired by the informant or the certifier, "unknown" should be indicated in the space provided for the item. Certificates that are incomplete or contain improper or inconsistent data will be rejected.

The manner of death *checked* should match with the cause of death *entered*. A physician, physician assistant or advanced practice professional nurse can certify only those deaths that are from natural causes. The coroner must certify all deaths from other than natural causes and those deaths that are not attended by a physician, physician assistant or advanced practice professional nurse during the last illness. The coroner must also complete the external cause section in all cases of injury or poisoning.

Upon receipt of a death certificate, the Local Registrar must screen the form thoroughly. The certificate should be accepted for filing only if it is complete and appears accurate. If the certificate is acceptable, the Local Registrar will assign and enter their local registrar number in the upper right corner on the ~Local Reg. No.~ line, sign, and enter the date of receipt on the certificate in

the appropriate item spaces. The Local Registrar should not sign or date a certificate unless it is acceptable for filing.

The Local Registrar should immediately* forward the death certificate to **Vital Statistics** for permanent filing. (* The certificate may be mailed or hand carried to the designated local issuance site when local issuance copies are requested. Local issuance sites may hold the death certificate up to, but not more than, 5 working days.)

When a death certificate is being sent from one county to another for Local Issuance copies, the Local Deputy State Registrar should be notified. This notification made by phone or FAX should include the name of the deceased, the county of death, the date sent to the local issuance site, whether it is being mailed or hand carried, and the name of the funeral facility.

The Local Registrar should make a copy of all unacceptable death certificates prior to returning the certificate to the mortician and place the copy in a tickler file for any needed follow up. The mortician must file a satisfactory replacement of a rejected certificate within a reasonable time.

No corrections or additions to the certificate are to be made by the Local Registrar. The Local Registrar should contact the mortician or certifier (physician, physician assistant, advanced practice professional nurse or coroner) for clarification of questionable entries. Chronic sloppiness should be tactfully discussed with the source, with emphasis on the fact that a death certificate is a permanent, legal document.

If a correction is needed on the death certificate after the Local Registrar has received it and the certificate is still in the possession of the Local Registrar, the certificate can be returned* to the funeral facility for the correction. The funeral facility should be instructed to return the certificate to the Local Registrar immediately after the correction is made. The Local Registrar should keep a copy of the rejected certificate in their file and follow back with the funeral facility if needed. (* If Local Issuance copies have been made, all copies must be returned to the Local Deputy State Registrar before the certificate can be returned to the funeral facility.)

If a Local Registrar receives a death certificate and/or a 24-Hour Report for a death that occurred in another county or for a body that was found in another county, the certificate and/or the 24-Hour Report should immediately be forwarded to the appropriate Local Registrar. If the certificate is not acceptable for filing, a file copy should be made and the original certificate returned to the mortician or certifier for completion. The mortician or certifier should also be given the name and address of the appropriate Local Registrar for them to forward the completed certificate to. The Local Registrar for that county should be sent a file copy and notified of the action; a record of this action should be kept by the first Local Registrar.

Do not attach sticky notes to certificates on top of the typed information; the ink may lift off when the note is removed.

Educated judgment must be exercised by the Local Registrar when screening the death certificate. It must be remembered that the Certificate of Death is a permanent, legal document that is used as prima facie evidence of a death. The Local Registrar should contact **Vital Statistics** with any questions regarding this screening.

B. Helpful Resources

Additional information on completion of the death certificate is available in the [*Funeral Directors' Handbook on Death Registration and Fetal Death Reporting*](#), [*Physicians' Handbook on Medical Certification of Death; Medical Examiners, and Coroners*](#), [*Handbook on Death Registration and Fetal Death Reporting*](#); and [*Guidelines for Reporting Occupation and Industry on Death Certificates*](#) provided by NCHS. Copies of these booklets may also be obtained by contacting Vital

Statistics.

Please note: Not all information contained in the NCHS handbooks is valid for Idaho.

Please contact **Vital Statistics'** registration or field staff with any problems, questions or concerns regarding completion of the death certificate.

Instructions for completion of every item on the Certificate of Death, in the order in which they appear on the certificate, can be found in the additional reference guide titled [Idaho Certificate of Death - How to Complete](#) . These instructions are to assist with the completion of the death certificate and with Local Registrar screening of the certificates.

The *Quick Check List* is provided to assist in checking a death certificate for proper completion. It includes a list of items to check for accuracy and consistency. It also contains information to help determine whether the certifier should be a physician, physician assistant, advanced practice professional nurse or the coroner of the county where death occurred (was pronounced). This list is a quick reference only, not a complete guide.

DEATH CERTIFICATE Quick Check List

The current version (at the time of death) of the death certificate must be legibly and cleanly typed or printed in unfading black ink.

All items must be completed or their omission accounted for. Check each item for completion, accuracy and consistency. Below is a list of select items to check and what to look for.

Check spelling and spacing of proper names and names of places. Use judgment in rejecting.

Please note: *Midnight belongs to the beginning of the new day.*

Three original signatures ▶ 1) Mortician 2) Certifier 3) Local Registrar
(black or dark blue ink)

Reject if the mortician's and/or certifier's signature is missing.

<u>Item to Check</u>	<u>What to look for</u>	<u>Reject</u>
3 - Social Security Number:	Must be nine or ten digits.	Yes
4 - Age:	Verify using 5 - Date of Birth vs. 23 - Date of Death .	Yes
8 - Marital Status:	Must agree with 9 - Surviving Spouse . If husband and wife die at same time, marital status must be checked as either "Married" or "Married, but separated" and the spouse's name must be entered on both certificates.	Yes

9 - Surviving Spouse (wife) and 12a - Mother:	Maiden name required (not including married name). If not known, "unknown" should be entered.	Yes
14 - Method of Disposition:	Must agree with 15 - Place of Disposition . If <u>body</u> (not cremated remains) is <u>removed from Idaho</u> for final disposition in another state, "Removal from Idaho" must be checked.	No Inform F.H.
19-22 - Place of Death:	All items must refer to same location. If 1, 2, or 3 checked in Item 19a, the name and location of the hospital must be entered in items 20-22.	Yes
19b-22 - Place of Death:	Check against 7a-g - Residence . If Place of Death and Residence list the <u>same</u> address, Item 19b should usually be checked as 4 – Decedent's home.	No Inform F.H.
23 - Date of Death:	Cannot have entry of "found" or "unknown."	Yes
24 - Time of Death, 26 - Time Pronounced, and 33 - Time of Injury:	24-hour clock (0000 through 2359) 4 digits, no colon and no a.m. or p.m. designation. 2359 = End of day 0000 = Beginning of the new day	Yes/ Use Judge- ment
28a-b - Autopsy:	Item 28a checked "Yes" -- Item 28b must be completed.	No
31 - Manner of Death vs. 27 - Cause of Death:	Must agree.	Yes
32 - Date of Injury vs. 23 - Date of Death vs. 25 - Date Pronounced vs. 39c/40b - Date Signed:	Sequence must agree. <i>(Local Registrar signature and date - cannot be earlier than 39c)</i>	Yes
34 - Place of Injury and 36 - Location of Injury:	Check against 19a-22 - Place of Death . If death was at Place of Injury, both entries should be the same address/location.	Use Judge- ment
39a - Certifier Signature vs. 39d - Name of Certifier:	Must match.	Yes

CERTIFIER ---- Physician vs. Coroner

Physician, physician assistant or advanced practice professional nurse can only certify when death was from natural causes and he or she attended the decedent during the last illness. Manner of Death - Item 31 must always be marked "Natural" when a physician, physician assistant or advanced practice professional nurse certifies the cause of death.

Coroner must certify when no physician, physician assistant or advanced practice professional nurse was in attendance during the last illness of the deceased.

Coroner must certify when the circumstances suggest that the death occurred as a result of other than natural causes* (accident, other injury, poisoning) or when Manner of Death - Item 31 is marked as any of the following: Accident, Suicide, Homicide, Pending investigation, or Could not be determined. This applies to old injuries if the death was caused by a later complication from that injury or is due to a complication of a chronic condition caused by an injury (such as paraplegia).

* The **Coroner** must also complete the external cause section Items 32-37 (and Items 38a-b if transportation injury) when the cause of death is not natural.

It is the responsibility of the mortician or other person acting as such, in charge of the body, to refer these cases to the coroner.

Note: An accident is not necessarily an overt injury. An accident is an unforeseen event which can cause injury, such as being caught outside in cold weather, causing hypothermia, due to exposure.