

## **Guidelines for Off-Site Removal of Deceased Persons at Collisions**

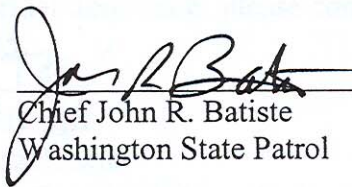
Fatality traffic collisions frequently result in long road closures affecting thousands of motorists. When a fatality occurs at a traffic collision, it is considered to be a crime scene and the appropriate law enforcement agency conducts a collision investigation and the county coroner conducts a death 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 and to restore the flow of traffic as soon as possible.


The Washington State Patrol, Washington State Department of Transportation, and Kittitas County Coroner recognize there are times when extrication of deceased victim trapped inside vehicle 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 responders 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. The coroner has jurisdiction over 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 coroner/deputy coroner.
2. If the vehicle is to be removed, on-scene response personnel will securely tarp the vehicle to ensure the human remains are not visible and that no evidence/property is lost during transport.
3. The vehicle will be transported on a flatbed vehicle to a mutually agreeable facility out of public view for extrication.
4. During the transport, the deputy coroner (and other investigating officer(s) if appropriate) will follow the transporting vehicle to the off-site 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.

6. In order to facilitate these guidelines, WSP personnel shall immediately notify the on-duty Coroner when a death is determined at the scene. This will expedite the process of getting the Coroner to the scene, which in turn will expedite decisions as to what investigation has been done, can be done, and should be done before the decision as to removal is made by the WSP personnel and the Coroner.
7. The decision to move the vehicle and deceased for extrication, shall, except in rare cases, not be made until the Coroner has arrived on the scene. If unusual circumstances exist, and the Coroner shall be delayed for an unreasonable time creating safety concerns, the decision may be made after phone consultation.

  
Chief John R. Batiste  
Washington State Patrol

  
Gregory L. Zempel  
Kittitas County Prosecutor/  
Coroner

  
Secretary Doug MacDonald  
Department of Transportation

*Handwritten note:*  
Hudson - (Kittitas County)  
Please give this to the coroner  
when you get a chance  
- Doug  
Mac