

# SPOKANE COUNTY MEDICAL EXAMINER'S OFFICE

North Spokane Professional Building  
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C070882GSC


## 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 Medical Examiner conducts a death investigation. 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 Spokane County Medical Examiner recognize there are times when extrication of deceased victims trapped inside vehicles is best accomplished at another location out of the public view. In these cases, transporting the vehicle to another location maintains the privacy and dignity of the deceased and the deceased'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 Medical Examiner 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 Medical Examiner/Deputy Medical Investigators at the scene.
2. If the vehicle is to be removed, on site 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 facility out of public view for extrication.
4. During transport, the Medical Examiner/Deputy Medical Investigator (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.

  
Chief John R. Batiste  
Washington State Patrol

  
Sally Aiken, MD  
Chief Medical Examiner  
Spokane County

  
Secretary Douglas B. MacDonald  
Department of Transportation