

RCW 70.58A.200 Reports of death—Filing and registration requirements. (1)(a) Reports of death and fetal death must comply with the requirements of this section.

(b) For the purposes of this section, "death" includes "fetal death" as defined in RCW 70.58A.010.

(2) A complete report of death must be filed with the local registrar in the local health jurisdiction where the death occurred for each death that occurs in this state. Except for circumstances covered by subsection (7) of this section, the report must be filed within five calendar days after the death or finding of human remains and prior to final disposition of the human remains as required by this section.

(a) If the place of death is unknown and the human remains are found in state prior to final disposition, the death must be filed in state and the place where the human remains were found is the place of death.

(b) When death occurs in a moving conveyance within or outside the United States and the human remains are first removed from the conveyance in state, the death must be filed in state and the place of death is the place where the remains were removed from the moving conveyance.

(c) In all other cases, the place where death is pronounced is the place where death occurred.

(d) An approximate date of death may be used if date of death is unknown. If the date cannot be determined by approximation, the date of death must be the date the human remains were found.

(3) If the death occurred with medical attendance, a funeral director, funeral establishment, or person having the right to control the disposition of the human remains under RCW 68.50.160 shall:

(a) Obtain and enter personal data on the report of death about the decedent from the person best qualified to provide the information;

(b) Provide the report of death to the medical certifier within two calendar days after the death or finding of human remains;

(c) File the completed report of death with the local registrar; and

(d) Obtain a burial-transit permit prior to the disposition of the human remains as required in RCW 70.58A.210.

(4) The medical certifier shall:

(a) Attest to the cause, date, and time of death; and

(b) Return the report of death to the funeral director, funeral establishment, or person having the right to control the disposition of the human remains under RCW 68.50.160 within two calendar days.

(5) The report of death may be completed by another individual qualified to be a medical certifier as defined in RCW 70.58A.010 who has access to the medical history of the decedent when:

(a) The medical certifier is absent or unable to attest to the cause, date, and time of death; or

(b) The death occurred due to natural causes, and the medical certifier gives approval.

(6) If the death occurred without medical attendance, the funeral director, funeral establishment, or person having the right to control the disposition of the human remains under RCW 68.50.160 shall provide the report of death to the coroner, medical examiner, or local health officer as allowed by (a) of this subsection.

(a) If the death occurred due to natural causes, the coroner, medical examiner, or local health officer shall determine whether to certify the report of death. If the coroner, medical examiner, or local health officer decides to certify the report of death, the person certifying the report shall:

(i) Attest to the manner, cause, and date of death without holding an inquest or performing an autopsy or postmortem, based on statements of relatives, persons in attendance during the last sickness, persons present at the time of death, or other persons having adequate knowledge of the facts;

(ii) Note that there was no medical attendance at the time of death; and

(iii) Return the report of death to the funeral home within two calendar days.

(b) If the death appears to be the result of unlawful or unnatural causes, the coroner or medical examiner shall:

(i) Attest to the cause, place, and date of death;

(ii) Note that there was no medical attendance at the time of death;

(iii) Note when the cause of death is pending investigation; and

(iv) Return the report of death to the funeral director, funeral establishment, or person having the right to control the disposition of the human remains under RCW 68.50.160 within two calendar days.

(7) When there is no funeral director, funeral establishment, or person having the right to control the disposition of human remains under chapter 68.50 RCW, the coroner, medical examiner, or local health officer shall file the completed report of death with the local registrar as required by subsection (2) of this section.

(8) When a coroner or medical examiner determines that there is sufficient circumstantial evidence to indicate that an individual has died in the county or in waters contiguous to the county, and that it is unlikely that the body will be recovered, the coroner or medical examiner shall file a report of death, including the cause, place, and date of death, to the extent possible.

(9) The coroner or medical examiner in a county in which a decedent was last known to be alive may file a report of death with the local registrar when the county in which the presumed death occurred cannot be determined with certainty. The coroner or medical examiner shall file a report of death, including the cause, place, and date of death, to the extent possible.

(10) The coroner or medical examiner having jurisdiction may release information contained in a report of death according to RCW 68.50.300.

(11) The local registrar shall:

(a) Review filed reports of death to ensure completion in accordance with this chapter;

(b) Request missing information or corrections;

(c) Ensure issuance of the burial-transit permit as required under RCW 70.58A.210;

(d) Register a report of death with the department if it has been completed and submitted in accordance with this section.

(12) A medical certifier, coroner, medical examiner, or local health officer shall submit an affidavit of correction to the state registrar to amend the report of death within five calendar days of receipt of an autopsy result or other information that completes or amends the cause of death from that originally filed with the department.

(13) The department may require a medical certifier, coroner, medical examiner, or local health officer to provide additional or clarifying information to properly code and classify cause of death. [2019 c 148 § 13.]