

Ridgely Police Department

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To: All Ridgely Police Department Personnel

From: Chief Gary M. Manos

Date: April 9, 2020

Ref: Special Order 20-03

OPERATIONAL GUIDANCE REGARDING COVID-19 DEATH INVESTIGATIONS

A. Purpose

This order is to provide guidance to limit the number of law enforcement personnel and the length of time spent on the scene of a death investigation.

B. Related Police Department Special Orders to Follow

1. 20-01 Functions and Potential Impact of COVID-19
2. 20-02.1 Enforcement of Executive Orders

C. Operational Guidance:

1. The number of department members responding to a death investigation should be limited to the least number of officers possible to safely handle the incident.
2. Ridgely Police Department Members responding, should preserve the scene and attempt to determine whether the death is suspicious. In lieu of moving the decedent's body, visually inspect the body from a safe distance. Avoid, as much as possible, touching anything within the scene, to include prescription medications, walls, and bedding. Additionally, be cognizant of your surroundings and avoid contact with clothing. Remember to disinfect your shoes upon leaving the scene and entering your vehicle.

3. If possible, *before* entering the location of the incident, officers should attempt to locate the complainant, family member or caregiver, via telephone, to ascertain the medical history and information of the deceased. If this is not possible, maintain a social distance of six feet from those on the scene.
4. Ridgely Police Department officers should attempt to ascertain if the decedent was under the care of an attending physician and to obtain the name of the doctor and a contact number. If the decedent is under the care of an attending physician, and he or she will sign off on the death certificate.
5. If officers need to enter the location of the incident, they should utilize their supplied Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) before entering the scene of the deceased.
6. Ridgely Police Department officers should use universal precautions to prevent contact with blood or other potentially infectious materials.
7. It is highly recommended that Ridgely Police Department officers **NOT** move the decedent's body to look for signs of trauma or foul play. Officers will inspect the body visually from a safe distance whenever possible. If no signs of trauma or foul play are evident, officers should secure the scene and wait, from a safe distance for the Forensic Investigator. Officers should limit their exposure to the body.
8. Ridgely Police Department members should follow the guidance of the Forensic Investigator once they assume the investigation on the scene.
9. Ridgely Police Department members should remain on scene, but again limit their exposure to the decedent until the body has been removed from the scene by a funeral home or by the OCME's transport.
10. Once finished with the call for service, officers should remove their PPE as explained in the special order 20-01 and related training.
11. After the incident is completed, officers shall then wash their hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not readily available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol. Officers should **NOT** touch their face afterwards.

12. Following usage of PPE, an email detailing the usage of the (PPE), will be sent to the sergeant and chief in order to replace the used PPE.

D. POLICY REVIEW

This Special Order is subject to review and amended as the current best policy for the COVID-19 environment changes and evolves.