



News from the Center for Health Statistics Concerning the Oregon Death Certificate

Issue: March 2013

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OVERS tip: changing the date of death

When it’s time to file a death certificate, our funeral home partners are usually the first to start the record. When using OVERS, the ‘Start/Edit New Case’ page asks for basic information such as decedent’s date of death to ensure there are no duplicates of the record before creating a new one. However, since the date of death is actually the medical certifier’s responsibility and is located on the ‘Pronouncement’ page, you won’t have access to change the date of death once you create the record.

If you make a mistake in entering the date of death, there’s no need to start the record over. As long as the record is not registered and the medical certifier has not yet completed their portion of the record, you can make a quick call to our OVERS Help Desk and they will make the correction. This correction can be made:

- Before or after you sign
- Before or after you make an electronic referral to the medical certifier
- After dropping the record to paper if the doctor has not yet signed
(Date of death is the only item that can be changed after the record is dropped to paper. Any other changes require an affidavit.)

Once the record has been registered, only the medical certifier can change the date of death by submitting an affidavit to



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OVERS tip: changing the date of death (Continued from pg 1)

correct it. To avoid the extra work, take care to ensure the date of death is correct before

Veteran's combat status update

The Center for Health Statistics would like to remind all funeral homes of the importance of reporting veteran combat status for all veteran deaths. The question "Was Decedent Ever in U.S Armed Forces?" must be completed on each death certificate. If the answer is yes, then the combat status question must be answered with a "Yes," "No," or "Unknown". An analysis of data collected as of February 1, 2013 shows that most funeral homes are reporting veteran combat status as required. Of the 225 funeral homes with registered 2012 and 2013 veteran death records, 175 (77.8%) have answered the combat status question for all of their veteran deaths. However, this percentage is down from 84.7 percent in August 2012.



It is also important to answer "Unknown" only if the veteran's combat status cannot be determined by the family or personal informant of the deceased. Only 20 funeral homes (11.4%) have answered "Unknown" to combat status on more than 75% of their veteran deaths. This figure drops to 11 funeral homes (7.9%) when funeral homes with fewer than five

Funeral homes with high percentages of veteran deaths with blank or unknown combat status will be contacted for follow-up.

the record is registered.

If you have any questions, don't hesitate to call the OVERS Help Desk at 971-673-0279.
❖

veteran deaths are removed from the count. Funeral homes with high percentages of veteran deaths with blank or unknown combat status will be contacted for follow-up (see article on page 3 for more information).

Also, when listing multiple combat locations, be sure to separate each combat location with a semi-colon (;). This ensures the correct entry of multiple combat locations into our database and their availability for analysis. We have found that nearly all records with multiple combat locations listed are correctly separated with semi-colons.

We would like to thank all of the funeral homes for working with the families of deceased veterans to obtain combat information, and for reporting this information on death certificates. Provision of this data helps us meet the requirements of House Bill 3611. Furthermore, the veteran status data will be analyzed by the Injury Prevention Program, in cooperation with the Oregon Department of Veterans' Affairs (ODVA), to determine if certain factors put veterans at higher risk of suicide and how veteran suicides might be prevented. If you would like more information on House Bill 3611 and how to properly report veteran combat status, you can find it on our website here: <http://1.usa.gov/ORDeathRegistration>.

You can also contact JoAnn Jackson, Registration Manager, at 971-673-1160 or via
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Veteran's combat status update (Continued from page 2)

email at joann.jackson@state.or.us. If you are interested in getting signed up to use

Follow-up on combat zone information

JoAnn Jackson from our office will continue to periodically follow-up with funeral directors who indicate “unknown” for the question “served in combat zone?” for all veteran deaths where suicide is listed as the manner of death.

In approximately 3 out of 5 follow-ups to date, funeral directors have had to amend the record. If the answer was changed to “yes”, the funeral director also had to add the combat zone location.

Amending the record to reflect the correct response to “served in a combat zone?” is quick and easy to do by submitting an electronic amendment in OVERS, if the record is electronic or drop to paper. If the death record is paper, a Supplemental Report must accompany the record to the county. Supplemental Report forms can be found on our website at

Vital records modernization bill

The Center for Health Statistics submitted a bill this legislative session, House Bill 2093, to update vital records laws. The complete bill can be found at

<http://landru.leg.state.or.us/13reg/asures/hb2000.dir/hb2093.intro.html>

The bill is an Oregon version of the Model State Vital Statistics Act that was recently revised by a national work group. As a model law, each state can modify the Model Act to meet state-specific needs. Our

OVERS, please contact Kerry Lionadh, OVERS Training Coordinator, at 971-673-1197 or via email at kerry.l.lionadh@state.or.us. ❖

<http://public.health.oregon.gov/BirthDeathCertificates/RegisterVitalRecords/Documents/Death/45-26V.pdf>.

In summary, please ask the family or informant the veteran combat questions.

Never assume the answer is

“unknown” for “served in a combat zone?”, and amend the record as soon as possible if you learn that the answer is

incorrect. Also, when JoAnn calls, please work with her to ensure the combat question was asked and that the answer was provided by the family or informant.

If you have questions, please do not hesitate to contact JoAnn at 971-673-1160 or via email at joann.jackson@state.or.us. ❖

Never assume the answer is “unknown” for “served in a combat zone?”.

proposed changes are primarily around the technology and security of records.

One proposed change is a requirement for facilities that had more than ten deaths the previous year to use EDRS. For these facilities, medical certification must occur through EDRS for deaths that occur in the facility. We hope that as doctors use EDRS for deaths within facilities, they will be comfortable enough with the system to use it for all death records.

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Vital records modernization bill (Continued from page 3)

Another proposed change expands ‘medical certifiers’ to include doctors, nurse practitioners, and physician’s assistants licensed in Washington, Idaho, or California. This would allow the primary care provider to complete the death certificate when the decedent received care in another state. We would end our current practice of requiring an inquiry on Oregon-licensed colleagues

Fetal death reporting demystified

Oregon has fewer than 350 reportable fetal deaths each year. Since fetal death events are infrequent, funeral directors and birth clerks may confuse the procedures for fetal death reporting with those of death and birth reporting.

The following information clarifies who is responsible for reporting, when disposal transit permits are necessary, and what information is included on the disposal transit permit.

Who is Responsible for Reporting?

An important way that fetal death reporting differs from death reporting is that funeral directors are not responsible for reporting fetal deaths or for creating a disposal transit permit.

By law, Oregon Revised Statutes 432.333 (2), fetal deaths can only be reported by a medical facility or the Medical Examiner. Parents and midwives delivering a fetus outside of a facility are *not authorized* to complete the fetal death report nor are funeral directors. In addition, funeral directors cannot complete the disposal transit permit. The funeral director must receive a completed disposal transit permit

before allowing an out-of-state certifier to complete the medical portion of the death certificate.

We will provide an update on the bill in the next newsletter.

If the bill passes, we will develop an implementation plan, which will include extensive communication with our partners. Changes would be effective (as proposed in the bill) January 1, 2014. ❖



from either the hospital facility prior to removing the fetal remains from the medical facility, or the Medical Examiner if the delivery occurred outside a facility.

When must a disposal transit permit be used?

A disposal transit permit is required for any fetus that will be removed from the delivery facility. In addition to the transit need, the permit is required for burial or cremation. If the medical facility reports that they did not create a disposal transit permit because the fetal death is not reportable by law, request the disposal transit permit and direct them to our office for more information. We will advise the medical facility on their responsibilities and assist them in completing the necessary forms.

What information is required on the disposal transit permit?

The medical facility or Medical Examiner will need the identification tag number (the identification tag is provided by the funeral home) that will be used for the remains from the funeral director before the disposal transit permit can be completed. If the

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Fetal death reporting demystified (Continued from page 4)

identification tag number is not known when the fetal remains are picked up from the medical facility, the funeral home can enter the tag number on the disposal transit permit.

Before removing the fetal remains from a facility, review the disposal transit permit to make sure the hospital or Medical Examiner included the following information:

- a. The permit must include the metal tag id number.

Burial and Cremation Tags

Burial and cremation tags are available from our office by sending in a *Request for Vital Records Forms and Tags* (Form 45-43). The address for mail orders is provided at the bottom of the form, as is the fax number. Payment should be sent with the order. However, if a billing account is already set up with our office, we will add this charge to your next invoice.

Burial tags are aluminum, and the cost is \$.09 each, or \$4.50 for a roll of 50.

Cremation tags are made of stainless steel, and cost \$.20 each, or \$10.00 for a roll of 50.

Home Burial Packets

Should funeral home or crematory staff receive questions about home burials, please refer these inquiries to our office. Customers should *not* be provided blank death certificates. Inquiries may be directed to Lynda Jackson at 971-673-1164. She will be able to provide general information about

Timeliness for Death Certificates

The five day turnaround period for filing death certificates is not always being

- b. Place, date, and time of delivery.
- c. Name of fetus, if any, and sex.
- d. Parent(s) names.
- e. Parent(s) birth date(s), and place(s) of birth.
- f. Mother's residential address.
- g. Name of medical attendant.

Additional information, including the laws and definitions for fetal death, are available on our website and in past newsletters located at www.oregon.gov/DHS/ph/chs/registration/index.shtml ❖

It is acceptable to use a cremation tag in lieu of a burial tag. A burial tag, however, cannot be used as a cremation tag even for a fetal death. Note that OAR 830-030-0040 instructs “the identifying metal disc must be attached to the outside of the cremation chamber, where it must remain until the cremation process is complete.” ❖



home burials or provide a home-burial packet. A packet includes laws and regulations, a blank death certificate, and a burial tag. Each tag number is tracked and the tag number issued must correspond to the remains identified on the completed death certificate. ❖

followed consistently by funeral homes.

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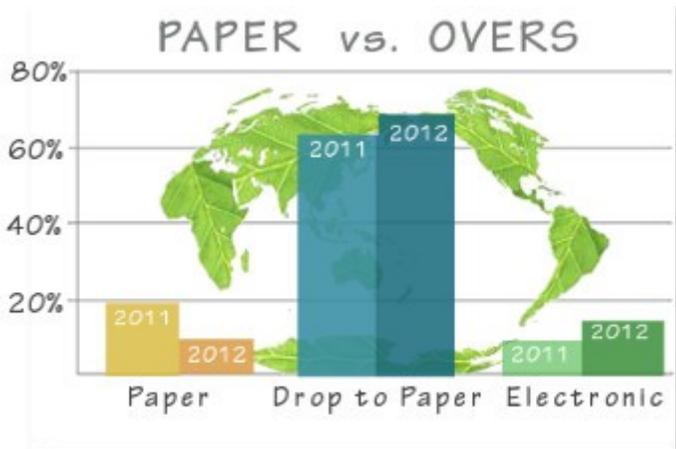
Timeliness for Death Certificates (Continued from page 5)

Submitting records beyond the five day time period not only makes the funeral home out of compliance, but it also impacts the families in their time of loss.

According to Oregon Revised Statute 432.307, “a certificate of death for each death that occurs in this state must be submitted to the county registrar of the

The OVERS Revolution

As more and more funeral directors and medical certifiers utilize the OVERS system, the number of paper death records received by the Center for Health Statistics has decreased. In 2011, 20% of all records received were paper, compared to 14.8% in 2012. The increase in electronic and drop to paper records received was also significant. In 2011, 14.5% of all records were delivered electronically, compared to 16.9% in 2012,



county in which the death occurred or to the Center for Health Statistics, within five days after death or the finding of a dead body and before final disposition.”

Both you and the Center for Health Statistics want to provide the best customer service for families by striving to meet this deadline. If you have any questions, please contact Cynthia Roeser at 971-673-0478 or via email at cynthia.r.roeser@state.or.us. ❖

and the percentage of drop to paper records received increased by 2.8% from 65.4% in 2011 to 68.2% in 2012.

The use of OVERS to electronically enter records has several advantages over paper delivery. Unlike mailed records, there is no cost to users; it is fast and easy to use; it is secure; it eliminates duplicate data entry (Center for Health Statistics staff re-enters paper records into OVERS); and it is environmentally sound. Please join the OVERS revolution by contacting Kerry Lionadh at 971-673-1197 or via email at kerry.l.lionadh@state.or.us.

The OVERS enrollment form can be found here: <http://public.health.oregon.gov/BirthDeathCertificates/RegisterVitalRecords/overs/Pages/NewUsers.aspx> ❖

Wanted—Newsletter topics

Have a question or idea for a future newsletter article? Contact Judy Shioishi, at 971-673-1166 or judy.shioishi@state.or.us. Judy collects ideas for articles and then shares them with the writing team.

Thank you to the contributors of this newsletter:

Kerry Lionadh, Linda Reynolds, Alicia Parkman, JoAnn Jackson, Steven Baird, Carolyn Hogg, Karen Hampton, Cynthia Roeser, Judy Shioishi, James Burke, Patty Thompson, Carol Sanders, Sarah Hargand, Karen Rangan, Lynda Jackson, and Jennifer Woodward.

We're just a phone call way

Have a question? Try asking one of the helpful CHS staff listed below.

Frequent Contacts

CHS Managers

Cause of Death Melissa Franklin 971-673-1144	OVERS Helpdesk 971-673-0279	State Registrar Jennifer Woodward 971-673-1185	OVERS Manager Karen Hampton 971-673-1191
Death Corrections Patty Thompson 971-673-1163		Amendments/Certification Manager Carol Sanders 971-673-1178	Data Processing Supervisor Cynthia Roeser 971-673-0478
		Statistics Manager Joyce Grant-Worley 971-673-1156	Certification Supervisor Karen Rangan 971-673-1182
		Registration Manager JoAnn Jackson 971-673-1160	

The Center for Health Statistics' office is located at:

800 N.E. Oregon St., Suite 225
 Portland, OR 97232-2162

Mailing Address: P.O. Box 14050
 Portland, OR 97293-0050

General Information: 971-673-1180

To Order Vital Records: 1-888-896-4988

Website: <http://public.health.oregon.gov/PHD/ODPE/CHS>

OVERS website: <http://public.health.oregon.gov/BirthDeathCertificates/RegisterVitalRecords/overs/Pages/index.aspx>

