It has been a few years since we have published a Newsletter concerning the Oregon Death Certificate. In fact, the last newsletter was published in 2008. We have continued to communicate with you via e-mail, telephone calls, and personal visits to answer your questions. Each contact has been an opportunity for us to connect with you, and we appreciate each communication.

Now, with the Newsletter concerning the Oregon Death Certificate published twice a year, we are able to share answers and responses to topics and inquiries with everyone. And, we can ensure that each of you receives the same information at the same time.

Each publication will address specific topics and issues, as this newsletter does. In addition, we will always provide our contact information, identify managers of each unit, as well as provide websites applicable to articles in newsletters.

If you have a topic or issue, that we have not covered, and you believe it would benefit others and is important to be published in the newsletter, please contact us. We look forward to hearing from you.

Thank you for all that you do!
Release of Non-Certified Scanned and Photocopied Death Certificates

To protect the confidentiality of records, Oregon law makes it “unlawful for any person to permit inspection of, or to disclose information from vital records or vital reports in the custody of the State Registrar of the Center for Health Statistics, County Registrar, or Local Registrar or to copy or issue a copy of all or part of any such record or report unless authorized ….” ORS 432.121 (1)

Only the State and County Vital Records offices are authorized to issue certified copies of vital records. For this reason, we instruct Funeral Directors and others requesting vital records not to photocopy or scan certified records. Also, not to fax, mail, or email copies as attachments even when requested to do so by a client.

The law is meant to protect recipients from accepting altered records, or from using records issued prior to legal changes. By requiring customers to use original certified records, we can protect their interests from persons who might defraud those using photocopied and illegally amended records. Certified copies are the only copies accepted by Federal and State agencies.

Place of Death – Care Facilities

When a decedent passes away in a licensed care-facility other than a hospital, there can be some confusion regarding how this information should be reported on the Death Certificate.

Care-Facilities are licensed with the state, and these licenses are connected in the background of our EDR system to the exact facility type and name. It is important that these facilities are designated accurately in the system so that their license numbers are properly linked to the record.

There are a number of common facility types preloaded into the system for you to choose from. They are:

- Nursing Facility
- Licensed Residential Care-Facility
- Licensed Assisted Living-Facility
- Licensed Adult Foster Home
- Hospice Facility

These facility types must be chosen from the dropdown menu, and should never be listed as “Other – Specify”. When you choose the correct type, you
should then use the EDR system search function (the spyglass button) to find the correct facility name. The appropriate fields will then automatically populate, ensuring that the facility information will be accurately reported.

The only facility names that are not in the EDR system are “Licensed Adult Foster Homes”. Due to their vast quantity and turnover, they must be entered by hand. Licensed Adult Foster Homes are licensed under the owner’s name, which should be listed in the facility name field.

If you are a funeral home that does not use the EDR system, you should list the correct facility types on the paper records exactly as shown in the above list, with the correct facility name. Other variations do not carry over to the electronic system. Example: “Rehabilitation Center or Licensed Care-Facility” rather than “Nursing Facility”.

Frequently, the place of death reported on the death certificate does not match with the facility license type due to unclear information provided by the caregivers, or perhaps the facility has changed ownership causing the facility name to be changed. This will always prompt a request for an affidavit to correct the certificate.

If you have problems finding a facility in the EDR system, try placing a % sign before and after a key portion of the name, then search.

If you are not sure about how facilities should be reported, or if you need help, you may call us. Please contact Sheila Vu, Registration Specialist, at 971-673-1183 for assistance. Also, we encourage our Funeral Homes to become a part of the EDR system. If you are interested in learning how to use the system, please contact the OVERS help desk at 971-673-0279. We look forward to hearing from you.

Reminder: All Funeral Directors must submit a death abstract card to the county of death for every death certificate produced. Death abstract cards should be submitted to the county of death within 24 hours of the death, regardless of
Fetal Deaths continue to generate questions including;
- what is a fetal death,
- how is it reported,
- who is responsible for reporting, and
- when must a disposition permit be used

What is a Fetal Death

Oregon has fewer than 350 reportable fetal deaths a year. This makes it difficult for most people involved in the process to feel comfortable with their knowledge about fetal death reporting.

In Oregon Statute (432.005(5)), fetal death is defined as the following:

“Fetal death” means death prior to the complete expulsion or extraction from its mother of a product of human conception, irrespective of the duration of pregnancy. The death is indicated by the fact that after such expulsion or extraction the fetus does not breathe or show any other evidence of life such as beating of the heart, pulsation of the umbilical cord or definite movement of the voluntary muscles.

Fetal death is a medical judgment of whether the fetus was alive outside of the mother - for even a few seconds. This medical judgment is arrived at, based on the definition of the Oregon Statute. Fetal death reports are required to be filed with the State Vital Record’s office if the fetus’ delivery weight was 350 grams or higher, or if the delivery weight is unknown, and/or is 20 completed weeks gestation or more.

How is it Reported

The report can be filed through the OVERS fetal death module or on the paper Report of Fetal Death (Form 45-3 01/08).
**Who is Responsible for Reporting**

By law, fetal deaths must be reported by a medical facility or the Medical Examiner only. Parents and midwives delivering the fetus outside of a facility are not authorized to complete the fetal death report. Funeral directors are not authorized to complete a fetal death report, and do not have direct access to the Disposal-Transit Permit.

**When Must a Disposition Permit be Used**

All fetal deaths regardless of gestation or weight that leave a facility for disposition must have a disposal-transit permit and a metal identification tag (provided by the funeral home). If the facility reports that they cannot provide a final disposition form, because the fetal death is not reportable by law, please direct them to our office. As always, we are available to answer questions from funeral homes or hospitals.

Disposal-Transit Permits are available on the second page of the paper Report of Fetal Death or through OVERS. In OVERS, a disposal-transit form is available by clicking on the Forms link under the Main menu, then clicking Print Forms. Birth clerks should use this form for situations where the fetus is being transported, but no report is required. The disposal-transit permit is also available within a fetal death record by clicking on Print Forms under Other Links in the left hand menu that opens once you are in a fetal death record. This disposal-transit form is available to facility birth certifiers and Medical Examiners only and must be obtained from the facility.

The disposal-transit permit requires that basic identifying information be included:

- place, date, and time of delivery,
- name of fetus if any, and gender,
- parent(s) names,
- parent(s). date(s). and place(s) of birth,
- mother’s residence address, and 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](http://www.oregon.gov/DHS/ph/chs/registration/index.shtml).
Final Disposition Permits in OVERS

Disposition permits are required for all deaths occurring in Oregon before final disposition occurs. Final disposition includes removing the body from Oregon unless the funeral home has a certificate of removal registration from the Oregon Mortuary and Cemetery Board. In that case, the body can be removed before the Final Disposition form is completed. At this time, only Washington State has a reciprocal agreement in place.

There are two ways to complete the final disposition form in OVERS. Most often, the form is completed within the record itself under Other Links, Print Forms in the left menu. This is a two-step process.

First, go to the Disposition Approval page. If the medical certifier has certified the record, most of the information on this page will auto-fill. If you are doing Alternative Authorization for Final Disposition, check the box and complete the information requested. Save the page when completed. If the death record has been signed by the Funeral Director, the final disposition form will now be available to print.

The final disposition form will not be available within the record if:
- The Funeral Director has not signed the record;
- The Disposition Approval page has not been completed and saved; or
- The record has Medical Certification requested, but the certifier has not completed their portion of the record (including signing).

Printing the Final Disposition form does not lock up the record. The Funeral Director can un-sign the record, and add or change information to the death record after printing the Final Disposition form. However the Final Disposition form is ‘locked’ after it is saved, and the information cannot be changed, although the form can be printed as many times as needed.

The second way to complete final disposition in OVERS, is under the Main Menu > Forms > Print Forms. This fill-able pdf form can be used if the final disposition information changes after the information is saved in the record, or if the primary Final Disposition Permit is not available for any of the reasons listed above. This form does not auto-fill since not within the record, but is available at all times. Type in the information needed, print, and sign the form(s).

As mentioned in a separate article, Fetal Death Disposal-Transit forms are not available to Funeral Directors. They must be obtained from the delivery facility or Medical Examiner.
Over the last few months, we have noticed an increase in errors on Correction Affidavits submitted to State and County Vital Record offices to amend death certificates.

The most frequent error found is an affidavit that is not signed by the Funeral Director. As you know, the correction affidavit is used to change a legal document - the death record, and therefore, must be filled out completely to be valid. Valid means no white-out is used, all spaces are filled in, and the document is signed by a licensed Funeral Director with his/her name and address written beneath their signature, and dated.

Also the affidavit must be specific. It should not include any statement such as “correct as shown on record.” This type of statement invalidates the signature of the Funeral Director, since he/she is not signing a statement, or certifying the actual amendment information.

In addition, the middle column headed “Original Record Now Shows”, must list exactly what was originally entered on the death record. The third column headed “Corrected Item Should Show”, must list the new information to be shown on the record. **We need both the before and after information listed on the affidavit to generate the correct footnote to complete the amendment.** The actual change to the record is completed at the State or County Vital Record’s office.

Once a death record is registered in our EDR system, the quickest way to get an amendment processed is by electronically completing and certifying it. This process is only available for drop to paper and fully electronic records. Fully paper records will still need to have the paper correction affidavit completed.


If you have questions, please contact us. Patty Thompson, in our Amendment’s unit, can be reached at 971-673-1163 or by e-mail at Patricia.A.Thompson@state.or.us.
Family members that need to send certified copies of records to countries outside the United States may ask how to obtain an authentication document or Apostille in addition to the certified death record.

Two types of documents are issued under International Agreements by the Oregon Secretary of State’s office, Notary Public Section. Mexico and many other countries require the authentication document called an Apostille. Other countries require a plain certificate.

The Apostille authentication is based on the signature of the Registrar on the death certificate. If the local County Vital Record’s office has not submitted a sample of their signature to the Oregon Secretary of State’s office, the Secretary of State will not be able to issue an Apostille. In these cases, certified copies must be ordered and issued by the State Vital Record’s office. Any certificate with the signature of a State Registrar may be used to obtain an apostille or a plain certificate.

The Secretary of State issues plain certificates based on specific Oregon laws. Since Oregon law gives Local County Vital Record’s offices the authority to issue death records for six months following the date of death, any County issued death record or State issued record is acceptable for the issuance of a plain certificate.

The country where the death certificate will be used must be provided when authentication documents are ordered. This allows the Secretary of State’s office to select the correct type of document to issue.

The current fee for these documents is $10 per authentication document. All documents with the signature of a notary public commissioned in Oregon may also be authenticated.

For additional information, your customers may contact the Secretary of State’s office at 503-986-2593 or see their web page at: http://www.sos.state.or.us/corporation/notary/howtoauth.htm
Recently the State Vital Records office has become aware of instances where Funeral Directors have submitted Certificates of Death outside of the timelines authorized in the Oregon Statute. When this occurs, Funeral Directors are out of compliance with the filing of death certificates.

**ORS 432.317 Report Upon Receipt of Body or Fetus; Authorization for Final Disposition; rules.** The Funeral Service Practitioner or person acting as a Funeral Service Practitioner who first assumes possession of a dead body or fetus shall make a written report to the County Registrar in the county in which the body or fetus was found within 24 hours after taking possession of the body or fetus. The report shall be on a form prescribed and furnished by the State Registrar of the Center for Health Statistics and in accordance with rules adopted by the Oregon Health Authority.

**ORS 432.307 Compulsory Filing of Death Certificates; Persons Required to File (1).** A certificate of death for each death that occurs in this state shall be submitted to the County Registrar of the county in which the death occurred or to the Center for Health Statistics, within five days after death or the finding of a death body and prior to final disposition, and shall be registered if it has been completed and filed in accordance with this section. **(2)** The Funeral Service Practitioner (Funeral Director) or person acting as a funeral Service practitioner who first assumes custody of the dead body shall submit the certificate of death …. The Funeral Service Practitioner or person acting as a funeral service practitioner shall provide the certificate of death containing information as specified by rule to identify the decedent to the certifier within 48 hours after death.

As we all know, our customers are most often the families of decedents, and deserve our most timely professional services in their time of loss. By meeting the timelines of the Oregon Statute, we further support our commitment to good customer service.

If you have any questions, as always, please contact us.
The Oregon Vital Events Registration System (OVERS) helpdesk receives many questions regarding common functionality in OVERS. This article provides answers to the most common questions we receive from funeral directors.

**Changing the Date of Death** - Many of you have asked about changing the date of death in OVERS, because once you start the electronic record, you no longer have access to the date of death. To change the date of death before you drop the record to paper, call the OVERS helpdesk and request that we change the date for you. Because the date of death is in the medical portion of the record, funeral directors cannot access it. Our office will gladly assist you in making the change. If you have already “dropped the record to paper” for the doctor to sign, the doctor must submit a paper correction affidavit along with the death certificate.

**Changing Information on the Death Certificate After Signing (un-sign)** - At times you may notice an item that you want to change after you have signed the death certificate. As long as you have not yet dropped the record to paper, you can easily un-sign the record, make your changes, and then sign it again. If you routinely check the working copy of the record before you drop it to paper, you will avoid committing mistakes to paper while also saving yourself the step of completing a paper affidavit.

To un-sign the record, click on the “sign” link located in the left menu. Once the Sign Page appears, you will notice that the “sign” button’s label changes to “unsigned”. Click on the unsigned button to edit the record. Once you make the necessary changes, validate the record and sign it again. (Note: this is different from the amendment process, because electronic amendments can only occur after the record registers at the State).

**Reprinting a Record that was “Dropped to Paper” from OVERS** - This is one of the most common requests received by the OVERS helpdesk. When a “dropped to paper” copy of a death certificate is lost in the mail, destroyed, or printed incorrectly you will need to call the OVERS helpdesk and request access to print it again. If you have the first copy, make sure to destroy it to avoid the possibility of sending two different copies of the same record to the State.
**Enter the I.D. Tag Number** – When creating a death certificate in OVERS, make sure that you always include the I.D. tag number associated with the decedent’s remains. OVERS does not remind you to enter this information, nor does it prevent you from signing the record if you forget to include it. We recommend that you print a working copy of the record and check the printed copy for the I.D. tag number before you sign or finalize the death certificate.

If you have questions or need help, please call the OVERS help desk at 971-673-0279.

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*Thank you* to the editor and writers who contributed to this newsletter:

Karen Hampton, Cynthia Roeser, Sheila Vu, Carolyn Hogg, Megan Welter, Kerry Lionadh, Carlos Herrera, Karen Rangan, Carol Sanders, Patty Thompson, JoAnn Jackson, Lynda Jackson, Jennifer Woodward.

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**Questions or Comments?**

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Judy.shioshi@state.or.us

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**Read More - archived articles:**

http://www.oregon.gov/DHS/ph/chs/registration/  
regnewsletters.shtml#offtherecord
Amending a record and need to know who to call?

Who are the CHS Managers?

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The Center for Health Statistics Offices are located at:

800 N.E. Oregon St., Suite 225
Portland, OR 97232-1201

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

Find Information regarding birth, death, marriage and divorce on our website at:


- How to Order Records
- Amendment Records
- Registration of Records

Find Information regarding the OVERS system (Oregon Vital Events Registration System) at:

http://www.oregon.gov/DHS/ph/overs/