

Q How do I obtain a copy of the Death Certificate?

A Death Certificates are not issued by the Coroner's Office. We complete only a portion, which consists of the date and time of death, the cause and manner of death, the identity of the deceased and any injuries, if sustained, within 96 hours. It is then given to the funeral home to complete their portion. The funeral home forwards it to the local registrar, who files it with the state. The funeral home will assist you in obtaining certified copies. Additional copies can be purchased online at www.health.state.pa.us/vitalrecords.

Berks County Funeral Homes

All County Cremation 3300 Kutztown Rd Laureldale 844.527.8947
Auman 235-247 Penn St. Reading 610.374.4505
Auman 390 W. Neversink Rd. Reading 610.370.0200
T. J. Baker 222-224 N. Front St. Reading 610.372.5954
Bean 6 Fairlane Rd. Reading 610.779.2800
Bean 1605 Rockland St. Reading 610.376.0985
Bean 129 E. Lancaster Ave. Shillington 610.376.1120
Bean 3825 Penn Ave. Sinking Spring 610.376.1129
Burkey & Driscoll 40 S. 4th St. Hamburg 610.562.2955
Cramp-Hummel 943 Centre Ave. Reading 610.375.4337
Cremation Society of Berks Co 423 Main Oley 844.527.8947
Dengler 144 N. Spruce St. Birdsboro 610.582.2292
Feeney 625 N. 4th St. Reading 610.372.4160
Gallman-Sonoski 910 Chestnut St. Reading 610.373.4653
Gallman-Sonoski 5153 Kutztown Rd. Temple 610.921.3002
Giles & Yeckley 21 Chestnut St. Mohnton 610.777.2331
Henninger 229 N. 5th St. Reading 610.373.4500
Hildenbrand 346 W. Main St. Kutztown 610.638.3526
Hill PO Box 233 Rehrersburg 717.933.4316
Hummel 824 Carsonia Ave. Reading 610.370.1300
Kirkhoff 206 N. Main St. Bernville 610.488.1611
Klee 1 E. Lancaster Ave. Shillington 610.777.7688
Kopicki-Bradley 239 S. 9th St. Reading 610.372.1730
Kuhn 739 Penn Ave. West Reading 610.374.5440
Lamm & Witman 243 W Penn Ave. Wernersville 610.678.3461
Leibensperger 65 S. 4th St. Hamburg 610.562.7823
Leibensperger 223 Peach St. Leesport 610.926.2737

Ludwick 333 Greenwich St. Kutztown 610.683.8111
Ludwick 25 E. Weis St. Topton 610.682.2434
Lutz 2100 Perkiomen Ave. Reading 610.376.7121
Milkins-Giles 4914 Kutztown Rd. Temple 610.921.3121
Morrell 124 W. Philadelphia Ave. Boyertown 610.367.2271
Mull 27 E. High St. Womelsdorf 610.589.2821
Ott 111 N. Reading Ave. Boyertown 610.367.2345
Sanders 1501-1503 N. 11th St. Reading 610.372.1624
Stitzel 3300 Kutztown Rd. Laureldale 610.929.3693
Stitzel 423 Main St. Oley 610.987.6231
Mae E. Stump 117 W. Main St. Fleetwood 610.944.7621
Walbert 14390 Kutztown Rd. Fleetwood 610.944.9900
Whelan- Schwartz 444 N. 9th St. Reading 610.374.0962

Other helpful phone numbers

Body Donations

Humanity Gifts Registry 215.922.4440
LifeQuest Anatomical 1.866.799.2300
International Institute for the Advancement of Medicine (I.I.A.M.) 1.800.486.4426

Berks County Veteran's Affairs 610.378.5601

Bereavement Support

MADD Berks Co. 610.372.6233
Mental Health Assoc. of Reading & Berks Co. 610.775.3000
Reading Health System 484.628.8000
Saint Joseph Medical Center 610.378.2000
SAM, Inc. (Service Access & Management) 610.236.0530
SHARE – Pregnancy & Infant Loss 800.821.6819
SIDS/PA 800.721.7437
Survivors of Suicide 610.775.3000

Local Counseling Agencies/Centers

YOUR Church/Religious Center

The businesses/agencies presented in this pamphlet are for information purposes only and are not an endorsement for any one specific business/agency. DJH/fjp 11/15

Dennis J. Hess

Coroner

Berks County Coroner
1047 MacArthur Road, Suite 200
Reading, PA 19605
610.478.3280



On behalf of myself and my staff, please accept our condolences for the loss of your loved one. We offer our deepest sympathy to you, your family and friends at this very difficult time.

Hopefully, this pamphlet may be helpful in answering some of your questions.

If you need additional information, contact me or my staff at any time. My office works a 24/7 schedule. General office hours are Monday thru Friday 8:00 am to 8:00 pm but a deputy is working at all times. Please call my office at 610.478.3280, if no one is in the office, leave a message and a deputy will return your call ASAP.

Q What is the Coroner's Office and why is it involved?

A The Coroner's Office is directed by the Coroner, who is an elected official of the County of Berks. The Coroner's Office is required by PA Law to investigate the circumstances of certain types of deaths to determine the cause and manner of the death. Cases requiring a Coroner's investigation are:

- * Any unusual or unexplained death
- * Sudden unexplained death when in good health
- * Any violent death, i.e. homicide, suicide or accident
- * Death of a person not under the recent care of a doctor
- * Any death under suspicious circumstances
- * Any death while in prison or the custody of police, sheriff, etc.

Q Are autopsies always performed in Coroner cases?

A No. A Coroner's investigation gathers the information concerning the circumstances of the death, medical history and social history of decedent.

If there is sufficient medical history and there is no evidence of foul play, an autopsy is not usually performed. If however, there is any evidence of foul play or the circumstances of the death are unusual, an autopsy is usually performed to determine the cause and manner of death.

If there is no suspicion of foul play and there is natural disease sufficient to account for the death, the Coroner's Office will release the body to a funeral home without an autopsy. If the

family wants an autopsy in these cases, they may contact a private pathologist for a private autopsy. This can usually be done through any hospital's pathology department. There is a cost to the family for a private autopsy. There is no charge to the family for a coroner's autopsy. The decision to perform an autopsy rests with the Coroner's Office.

Family objections may be noted but an autopsy may be required if it is deemed necessary by the Coroner's Office.

Q Will autopsy prevent an open casket funeral or delay funeral services?

A No. Autopsies are performed in a professional manner that does not interfere with viewing your loved one. Most autopsies are performed within 1 or 2 days of the death, therefore, not interfering with the funeral services.

Q Where will my loved one's body be taken?

A The body will be taken to the Reading Health System, S. 6th Ave. and Spruce St., West Reading, PA 19611.

Q When will my loved one be released by the Coroner's Office?

A The body will be released to the funeral home, of your choice, after our preliminary investigation, which may include toxicology and/or autopsy, when necessary, is completed. Autopsies are scheduled by our pathologist as soon as possible. Occasionally, some cases take longer than others depending on the investigation required.

Q Is viewing allowed before my choice of a funeral home?

A Not routinely. Only in extreme, unusual and rare circumstances is limited viewing allowed by the Coroner's Office. An arrangement for viewing at the funeral home is encouraged.

Q Why are tubes and other medical devices left in place on the body?

A When performing an autopsy, all items are checked to make sure they were not involved in the death. Everything is left in place because they can assist in the investigation.

Q What do I do now?

A As soon as possible, a funeral home should be selected to handle the arrangements. You are requested to call the Coroner's Office when this decision is made. When you speak with the funeral director, please tell them the Coroner's Office is holding your loved one. The funeral director will call the Coroner's Office and your loved one will be released.

Q How long does it take for the Death Certificate to be completed?

A The Coroner's Office must issue a Death Certificate within 96 hours. If the cause and manner is not known at this time, a pending Death Certificate is issued so there is no delay in funeral services. When the Coroner investigation is completed, which may include toxicology results, autopsy findings, police investigations and other investigations as determined, the final Death Certificate will be issued. In some cases, this may take 4 to 8 weeks or longer.