

TITLE 1: GOVERNMENT
DIVISION 2: EXECUTIVE BRANCH

§ 26013. Death Registration.

(a) A certificate of death for each death which occurs in the CNMI shall be filed with the Health and Vital Statistics Office, or as otherwise directed by the Registrar, within 5 days after death or the finding of a dead body and prior to final disposition, and shall be registered if it has been completed and filed in accordance with this section.

(1) If the place of death is unknown but the dead body is found in the CNMI (Saipan, Rota, Tinian or the Northern Islands), the certificate of death shall be completed and filed in accordance with this section. The place where the body is found shall be shown as the place of death. If the date of death is unknown, it shall be determined by approximation. If the date cannot be determined by approximation, the date found shall be entered and identified as such.

(2) When death occurs in a moving conveyance in the CNMI (Saipan, Rota, Tinian or the Northern Islands), and the body is first removed from the conveyance in the CNMI (Saipan, Rota, Tinian or the Northern Islands), the death shall be registered in the CNMI (Saipan, Rota, Tinian or the Northern Islands) and the place where it is first removed shall be considered the place of death. When a death occurs on a moving conveyance while in international waters or air space or in a foreign country or its air space and the body is first removed from the conveyance in the CNMI (Saipan, Rota, Tinian or the Northern Islands), the death shall be registered in the CNMI (Saipan, Rota, Tinian or the Northern Islands) but the certificate shall show the actual place of death insofar as can be determined.

(3) In all other cases, the place where death is pronounced shall be considered the place where death occurred.

(b) The funeral director or person acting as such who first assumes custody of the dead body shall file the certificate of death. He or she shall obtain the personal data from the next of kin or the best qualified person or source available and shall obtain the medical certification from the person responsible therefore. The funeral director or person acting as such shall provide the death certificate containing sufficient information to identify the decedent to the certifier within 48 hours after death.

(c) The medical certification shall be completed within 48 hours after receipt of the death certificate by the physician in charge of the patient's care for the illness or condition which resulted in death, except when inquiry is required by the Attorney General's Office. In the absence or inability of said physician or with his or her approval, the certificate may be completed by his or her associate physician, the chief medical officer of the institution in which death occurred, or the physician who performed an autopsy upon the decedent, provided such individual has access to the medical history of the case, and death is due to natural causes. The person completing the cause of death shall attest to its accuracy either by signature or by an approved electronic process.

(d) When inquiry is required by the Attorney General's Office, the pathologist or other medical examiner in the jurisdiction where death occurred or the body

TITLE 1: GOVERNMENT
DIVISION 2: EXECUTIVE BRANCH

was found, shall determine the cause of death and shall complete and sign the medical certification within 48 hours after taking charge of the case.

(e) When death occurs in an institution and the person responsible for the completion of the medical certification is not available to pronounce death, another physician at the institution who views the body may pronounce death, attest to the pronouncement by signature or an approved electronic process, and, with the permission of the person responsible for the medical certification, release the body to the funeral director or person acting as such. The funeral director or person acting as such must in all cases obtain the medical certification from the person responsible for its completion or obtain assurance that the medical certification has been provided to the Registrar by an approved electronic process.

(f) If the cause of death cannot be determined within the time prescribed, the medical certification shall be completed as provided by regulation. The attending physician, pathologist, or medical examiner shall give the funeral director or person acting as such notice of the reason for the delay, and final disposition of the body shall not be made until authorized by the attending physician, pathologist, or medical examiner.

(g) Upon receipt of autopsy results or other information that would change the information in the cause-of-death section of the death certificate from that originally reported, the certifier shall immediately file a supplemental report of cause of death with the Health and Vital Statistics Office to amend the record.

(h) When a death is presumed to have occurred within the CNMI but the body cannot be located, a death certificate may be prepared by the Registrar only upon receipt of an order of the CNMI Superior Court which shall include the finding of facts required to complete the death certificate. Such a death certificate shall be marked "Presumptive" and shall show on its face the date of death as determined by the court and the date of registration, and shall identify the court and the date of the decree.

Source: PL 15-50, § 15.