



Bingham County Coroner's Office  
James "Jimmy" Roberts, Coroner  
501 N Maple St. #303  
Blackfoot, ID 83221  
Office 208-782-3153 Fax 208-684-6275

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**On behalf of the Bingham County Coroner's Office, we offer our deepest sympathy to you for your loss.**

This is a difficult time, and we know that you will have many questions. We hope that you will find this helpful in answering those questions as you go through the next several days and weeks. Please take time to review the information and feel free to call us if you need any additional information.

The Bingham County Coroner's Office is required by Idaho law § 19-4301 to conduct an investigation regarding any deaths that might be a threat to the health and safety of the public and/or any sudden, suspicious, unattended, or unexpected deaths.

Your loved one may be transported to a local funeral home where the Coroner will determine whether it is necessary to conduct testing and or have he or she transported to our contracted forensic pathology agency for an autopsy. The extent of the testing and or autopsy will be determined by the Coroner and will be based on the information needed to determine cause and manner of death for your loved one. Idaho law both requires and authorizes the County Coroner to make these determinations.

### **Next Steps for family:**

1. You will need to select a funeral home to handle final arrangements for your loved one. The funeral director will assist you in making the necessary arrangements, and will be your primary contact for inquiries about those arrangements.
2. Contact information for the Coroner's Office is located at the top of this document including the Coroner's personal cell phone.
3. Please review this brochure for answers to your questions and information that can assist you during this time. Information about other agencies or resources that can help you as you move forward is also included, along with how to request copies of documents you may need. Please feel free to contact us with any additional questions.

Again, please accept our condolences and deepest sympathies for your loss.

## **Frequently asked questions:**

### **Q. How do I contact the Bingham County Coroner's Office?**

- The Bingham County Coroner's Office can be reached by calling 208-782-3040. As our office is not staffed please leave a message and someone will return your call as soon as possible.

### **Q. What funeral home should I use?**

- Because the Bingham County Coroner's Office is a governmental office, we can't refer families to a specific funeral home. We encourage you to consult with your family and friends for recommendations.

### **Q. Who can make funeral arrangements or final disposition decisions for a decedent?**

- Only next-of-kin or the individual who holds a durable power of attorney for health care for your loved one can make funeral arrangements or final disposition arrangements for your loved one. A significant other or friend, regardless of how long they have known or been involved with your loved one, cannot make arrangements unless they have legal documentation authorizing them to do so.

### **Q. Do I need to come to the Bingham County Coroner's Office to identify my loved one? Can I view my loved one at the Bingham County Coroner's Office?**

- No. You won't be asked to come the Bingham County Coroner's Office to complete an identification. The Coroner and staff of the Bingham County Coroner's Office along with our contracted forensic pathology center work diligently to properly identify each decedent we encounter.
- Viewing your loved one in the comfort of the funeral home setting is the only option available in Bingham County.

### **Q. How do I get my loved one's personal items back?**

- Your loved one's personal items will be released with him/her to the funeral home chosen by legal next-of-kin. The funeral home will then arrange a time with legal next-of-kin to receive those personal items.

### **Q. Will my loved one receive an autopsy? How will I know if an autopsy is performed?**

- The Coroner will review the circumstances surrounding your loved one's death and decide whether to perform an autopsy based on the standards of forensic practice outline by the National Association of Medical Examiners.
- Legal next-of-kin will be notified when a decision has been made to perform an autopsy. Your investigator will contact you and answer any questions you may have.

### **Q. Why is the Coroner's Office investigating my loved one's death?**

- The Bingham County Coroner's Office is governed by Idaho Statutes. These statutes require that the Coroner investigate certain types of deaths to determine cause and manner of death.
- The following list does not cover all types of deaths that require investigations, but deaths requiring investigation generally include:
  - Death associated with trauma or violence, whether homicide, suicide or accident.
  - Deaths associated with suspicious or unusual or unnatural circumstances.

- Deaths not attended by a physician and where the cause of death cannot be certified by a physician.
- Deaths who are unclaimed, exposed or unidentified.
- Death occurring within 24 hours of admission to a hospital or deaths in the ER.
- Deaths due to infections or contagious disease or other potentially hazardous public health conditions.
- Death of children under 18 who do not have a significant diagnosis that led to death.

**Q. My loved one had an autopsy. Will we still be able to have an open casket funeral?**

- The surgical procedures used to perform an autopsy do not interfere with having an open casket funeral.

**Q. What if I do NOT want an autopsy performed?**

- The Coroner authorizes autopsies based on the circumstances surrounding the death and the need to determine cause and manner of death; however, the investigator will note your concern and share that information with the Coroner. Under Idaho Code 19-4103B either the Coroner or Prosecuting Attorney can order an autopsy. This decision does not require the consent of the next-of-kin.

**Q. What if I want an autopsy to be completed and the Coroner's Office is not going to do one?**

- The Coroner reviews each case to decide if an autopsy is needed to determine cause and manner of death. If the Coroner determines that the cause and manner of death can be accurately determined without an autopsy, absent a request by the prosecuting attorney an autopsy will not be completed. However, the investigator will note your concern or request in the case file and share that information with the Coroner. If a final decision is made to not complete an autopsy and you still wish to have one completed, you will need to arrange for a private autopsy to be completed by a private pathologist at a local medical facility.

**Q. Where will my loved one's autopsy take place?**

- The Bingham County Coroner's Office currently contracts with the Ada County Coroner's Office for forensic pathology services. The Ada County Coroner's Office is currently the only Nationally accredited forensic pathology center in the Pacific Northwest.

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

- Once the autopsy has been completed your loved one will be released to the funeral home chosen.

**Q. How long does it take to determine the cause and manner of death?**

- There is not a set amount of time for determining the cause and manner of death. Each case is unique to that individual. An autopsy or forensic inspection is generally conducted as soon as possible based on scheduling with the forensic pathology center. Our staff works diligently to determine cause and manner of death; however, we cannot guarantee a specific time frame for those to be completed as they are dependent upon the unique circumstances of the investigation for each individual.

**Q. How long does it take for toxicology results to come back?**

- The Bingham County Coroner's Office uses an outside facility for toxicology testing and there is no set time when we will get the results back. Toxicology results can take anywhere from 6 to 8 weeks to be completed.

**Q. My loved one had an autopsy. When will results be available?**

- The autopsy procedure is very comprehensive examination, and the process, along with any additional associated testing, is time consuming. The final report (known as an autopsy report) may be delayed due to case load. If you would like to find out if there are preliminary autopsy findings, you may call and request to speak with the investigator on the case. An autopsy report for cases with criminal charges will not be released for 45 days after sentencing and/or all appeal times have passed.

**Q. There is blood and other body fluid or biohazardous materials in the location where my loved one died. Who can I call to help clean the area?**

- There are a number of biohazard and scene clean-up companies that can be found on the internet and in the phone book. Homeowners insurance or renter's insurance may help with these costs and you will want to contact your insurance company to get more information.

**Q. Do I have to pay for Coroner services (Autopsy, investigation, specimen testing, etc.?)**

- The Bingham County Coroner's Office is a county government office funded by tax dollars. Standard services provided by the Coroner's Office, in cases under the jurisdiction of the office, are completed at no additional cost to your loved one's immediate family. In certain cases, the Coroner's Office may charge fees for non-standard services.

**Q. What do I do next?**

- We recommend that you seek support from family and friends in this difficult time. If you are the legal next-of-kin or legally authorized person, you will need to begin making final arrangements for your loved one. Once you have selected a funeral home, the director can guide you and help you fill out all necessary paperwork.

**Q. Will I be told the cause and manner of death of my loved one?**

- Yes. In cases when there is an autopsy or forensic inspection is completed for your loved one, the investigator will contact the legal next-of-kin, and will let you know what the final cause and manner of death are and update you on test results.
- Cause of death is the medical condition(s) or process that resulted in your loved one's death.
- Manner of death is the circumstance of or the way that death occurred, such as Natural, Accident, Homicide, Suicide, or Undetermined.

## **Requesting reports, photos and copies:**

### **Q. How do I get a copy of the autopsy report or forensic inspection report?**

- The legal next-of-kin or durable power of attorney for health care may request a copy of the autopsy report or forensic inspection report from the Coroner's Office
- Please contact the Coroner's Office at 208-782-3040 or find the request for records request form located on our website: [Bingham County Idaho - Coroner \(binghamid.gov\)](http://binghamid.gov) in "Family resources"
- Reports become available once received from our pathology center unless there is legal action pending.

### **Q. Can I request copies of photos taken?**

- In the event that there is a lawsuit filed with the court or there are other legal matters where you have hired an attorney and photos are required, your attorney can submit a formal request for a copy of the photos needed. This request will be reviewed by legal staff for Bingham County and you and/or your attorney will be notified of the outcome of that review.

### **Q. Can I get copies of other case documents?**

- Copies of other documents such as medical records, legal records, police reports, etc. gathered for the investigation will not be released by the Bingham County Coroner's Office. You will need to contact the agencies or organizations who created those documents directly and request copies.

## **Confirmation of Death Letters and Probate Information**

### **Q. I've been asked to provide a Confirmation of Death. What do I do?**

- A death certificate acts as a confirmation of death.
- There may be time when you are asked to provide a confirmation of death by an organization or business such as your loved one's life insurance company and the death certificate is not yet available. In those cases, you can request a confirmation of death letter from the Coroner's Office. We can provide a confirmation of death letter if there will be a delay with the death certificate.
- You will need to request the confirmation of death letter directly from the Coroner.

### **Q. Do I have to go to probate?**

- Idaho law regulates probate actions. You should contact an attorney to help you understand what your options are.

## **My Loved One's Medication**

### **Q. Why were my loved one's medications collected?**

- Your investigator collects all medications prescribed to or possibly taken by your loved one when they respond to a scene. These medications are reviewed, counted and compared to when prescriptions were filled to determine compliance with medications. Once the medications are cataloged they are destroyed in a safe manner.

### **Q. What steps should I take if I found medications belonging to my loved one?**

- Contact your investigator immediately and let them know what medications you've located. They may have several questions for you so having the medication bottles with you when you call will be helpful.

### **Q. Can I simply throw the medication away?**

**No.**

- PLEASE don't dispose of your loved one's medication without notifying your investigator. It's important to the accuracy and completeness of the investigation of your loved one's death.
- In order to protect others, reduce misuse, and protect the water system, proper disposal of the medications in a safe manner is important.
- Do not flush medications down the toilet/drain.

## **What is the process regarding the death certificate?**

### **Death Certificate Process**

- Decedent information collected by the coroner's office is shared with the funeral home to assist with contacting with next of kin.
- The funeral home meets with families to collect further demographic information required for the Death Certificate.
- Death Certificate information is entered by the funeral home into the Idaho Dept. of Health & Welfare Bureau of Vital records and Statistics online program and assigned to the coroner or chief deputy.
- In cases of natural death where cause of death (COD) has been determined via investigation and medical records review the Death Certificate is completed online and usually available through the funeral home within 10-14 days of signing. Collection and review of the investigation, witness statements, medical records and social/work history can often take time.
- In cases where the COD is not readily apparent toxicology and or autopsy may be ordered. In those cases:
  - ❖ Death Certificate is signed as "Pending" and remains so until medical records, toxicology, and autopsy reports are completed and received.
  - ❖ Once a case is determined "Pending" in the online system the Idaho Dept. of Health & Welfare Bureau of Vital records and Statistics then will mail a hard copy of the "Supplemental Death Certificate" to the coroner's office to be completed when all information is available.

- ❖ Once all reports are received a COD of death is determined along with the Manner of Death, the Death Certificate is completed.
- ❖ The “Supplemental” Death Certificate is scanned and recorded in the coroner’s software system and then mailed to Idaho Dept. of Health & Welfare Bureau of Vital records and Statistics.
- ❖ Usually, a final Death Certificate is available to funeral homes with 10-14 days after Idaho Dept. of Health & Welfare Bureau of Vital records and Statistics finalizes the Death Certificate.
- In cases where medical records take time to collect or it is difficult to identify a decedent’s healthcare provider the timeline is extended.
- The timeline may also be extended when an unknown substance is detected in toxicology testing and further testing is required to determine COD.

## **Burial/Cremation Financial Assistance Information**

- If your loved one had a pre-need, pre-paid funeral plan, that plan should be followed.
- Legal next-of-kin or the individual named as your loved one’s representative in a “Durable Power-of-Attorney for Health Care” or other legal document will be responsible to make arrangements for the funeral, burial/cremation, and payment cost for these services.
- If you are unable to pay for the funeral/cremation, Idaho law allows you to apply for financial assistance for those costs through the Indigent Services Office in the county where your loved one lived.
- Other assistance options, available under specific circumstances, are listed in this brochure.

### **Indigent Services Non-Medical Assistance**

- *Each county in Idaho has the ability to help its county residence with cremations or funerals when that person can’t pay. If this is the case, you’ll want to call the office in the county where your loved one resided and learn more about your eligibility for this assistance and how to apply. The number for the Bingham County Indigent and Veterans Services is listed in this brochure. It’s a good idea to contact them directly and talk with them about the application, what requirements are, and what they will need to avoid any confusion.*

## **Next-of-Kin Information/Authority to make decisions**

- The Coroner’s Office follows an order of authority for next-of-kin and/or who can make final decisions for your loved one. This list does not include all limitations but does show the general order of authority we follow:
  1. If your loved one died while on active duty, the person listed in a written document signed by your loved one or the person listed by your loved one in his/her United States Department of Defense records of emergency data;
  2. The person listed as agent under a durable power of attorney for health care or other durable power of attorney if it includes the authority to make funeral, burial or cremation arrangements;
  3. The surviving spouse\* of your loved one (even if separated but not divorced);
  4. A majority of the surviving adult children\*;

5. The surviving parent(s)\*;
6. A majority of the surviving adult Sibling(s);
7. The person appointed by a court as the personal representative or administrator of your loved one's estate;
8. The person listed as the personal representative of your loved one's estate in their will;
9. The adult person(s)\* entitled to inherit from your loved one under the laws of Idaho, in the next degree of kinship;

*\* If any of the designated persons in the list are not competent, authority moves to the next person in the list. If there is more than one person fitting the category listed, a majority of those legally competent persons must agree on the disposition.*

## **Durable power of Attorney/Personal Representative Information**

### **Durable Power of Attorney for Healthcare:**

- A durable power of attorney for healthcare is the only type of power of attorney that does not expire after death. There are different types of power of attorneys: financial only, healthcare only, some for a specific amount of time, and some durable. The Coroner's Office requires that anyone acting on behalf of a decedent have a Durable Power of Attorney for Healthcare that allows that person who will make final decisions for your loved one unless they are legal next-of-kin. Idaho law states that a person who has a durable power of attorney for healthcare is the person who will make final decisions for your loved one. That person may be a family member, a friend, or a professional who was given this authority in a written document that is properly completed.
- A general power of attorney, guardianships and conservatorships end at death.

### **Personal Representative:**

When there is no one available who would have legal authority to handle the legal matters of the estate, the court can appoint a personal representative. An application or case must be filed with the local court requesting appointment as a personal representative. The case will be assigned to a judge and there may be hearings held in the matter. At times the Treasurer of the County where your loved one lived will be assigned this responsibility under Idaho Code. The person assigned as personal representative must follow the court's directions as stated in the court order. If you choose to become a personal representative for a decedent, you should seek advice from an attorney.



## Additional information

- [Bingham County Idaho - Coroner \(binghamid.gov\)](http://binghamid.gov)
- Death certificate information may be found at:
- [Death | The Official Website of the State of Idaho](http://binghamid.gov)
- For information of cremation assistance and to complete an application:
- Bingham County Indigent and Veterans Services 208-782-3097
- [Bingham County Idaho - Cremation Assistance \(binghamid.gov\)](http://binghamid.gov)

## Coroner:

James “Jimmy” Roberts is your elected Bingham County Coroner. He has over 30 years of exemplary public service having served as a career Fireman/Paramedic Lieutenant and U.S. Navy Corpsmen with the U.S.M.C.

In 2004 my father was the victim of a homicide near Idaho City and although that was tragic for our family in many ways, discovering the flawed system of death investigation was almost more disheartening. Finding out that there are many Coroners who are not experienced, knowledgeable or educated in medicolegal death investigation motivated me for over 20 years to take programs at some of the most respected schools in our country and even traveling abroad to learn how it’s done in Europe. My goal is to make certain that every person who this office takes care of in the course of our duties is treated with respect, dignity, compassion and the highest level of professionalism possible. I retired from 30+ years in emergency services working as a Firefighter/Paramedic, training officer, quality assurance officer, grant writer, and liaison to many government agencies, graduate of the Plymouth Police Academy in 2013 and I also served with US Navy Reserve as a corpsman assigned to the United States Marine Corps. In 2018, I moved home, Blackfoot, where I was built and where my family has lived since the late 19th century. I have an Associate’s Degree in Arts, and have attended Medicolegal Death Investigation certificate programs with the St. Louis School of Medicine, The University of North Dakota, University of Tennessee, Knoxville (Forensic Anthropology Center), and have done working internships with the Netherlands National Police Forensic Division as well an investigator with the Ada County Coroner’s Office, I am proud to be able to serve the residents and visitors of Bingham County as the Coroner. Our deputy coroners (Medicolegal death investigators) are dedicated members of our community. It is the mission of our entire staff of dedicated professionals to provide the best possible medicolegal service to our community.

Yours in Service,

Jimmy Roberts  
Bingham County Coroner