
SENATE BILL 6380

State of Washington

52nd Legislature

1992 Regular Session

By Senators Bauer and McCaslin

Read first time 01/28/92. Referred to Committee on Health & Long-Term Care.

1 AN ACT Relating to death certificates; and adding new sections to
2 chapter 70.58 RCW.

3 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

4 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** A new section is added to chapter 70.58 RCW
5 to read as follows:

6 (1) A certificate of death for each death that occurs in this state
7 shall be filed with the local registrar of the district in which the
8 death or fetal death occurred within three working days after a death
9 is known and prior to final disposition. All items on the death
10 certificate form shall be completed.

11 (a) If the place of death is unknown but the dead body is found in
12 Washington state, the certificate of death shall be completed and filed
13 in accordance with this section. The place where the body is found

1 shall be shown as the place of death. If the date of death is unknown,
2 it shall be determined by approximation.

3 (b) If the death occurs in a moving conveyance in the United States
4 and the body is first removed from the conveyance in Washington state,
5 the death shall be registered in Washington state and the place where
6 the body is first removed shall be considered the place of death. If
7 a death occurs in a moving conveyance while in international waters or
8 air space or in a foreign country or its air space and the body is
9 first removed from the conveyance in Washington state, the death shall
10 be registered in Washington state but the certificate shall show the
11 actual place of death insofar as can be determined.

12 (2) The funeral director or person acting as such who first assumes
13 custody of the dead body shall file the certificate of death. He or
14 she shall obtain the personal data from the next of kin or the best
15 qualified person or source available and shall obtain the cause of
16 death from the attending physician, coroner, or medical examiner.

17 (3) The cause of death section shall be completed, signed, and
18 returned to the funeral director within forty-eight hours after death
19 by the physician in attendance or physician's designee at the time of
20 death according to his or her best knowledge and belief. If there is
21 no attending physician or physician's designee or if the attending
22 physician and the physician's designee will be unavailable for
23 signature for forty-eight hours after death, the certificate shall be
24 completed and signed by one of the following:

25 (a) A physician who has access to the decedent's medical history;

26 (b) The physician, coroner, or medical examiner who performed an
27 autopsy upon the decedent;

28 (c) The chief medical officer of the institution in which the death
29 occurred;

1 (d) The coroner or medical examiner, if the decedent died suddenly
2 when in apparent good health and without medical attendance within
3 thirty-six hours preceding death;

4 (e) The coroner or medical examiner, or the prosecuting attorney in
5 their absence, if such individual has access to the decedent's medical
6 history or views the deceased, and death is due to natural causes.

7 (4) If the circumstances suggest that the death was caused by
8 unlawful or unnatural causes, the coroner or medical examiner shall
9 determine the cause of death and shall complete and sign the medical
10 certification within forty-eight hours after taking charge of the case.

11 (5) If the cause of death cannot be determined within forty-eight
12 hours after death, the attending physician, coroner, or medical
13 examiner shall state the cause of death is pending investigation or
14 unknown and return the death certificate to the funeral director or the
15 person acting as such. If the cause of death becomes known, the
16 attending physician, coroner, or medical examiner shall complete an
17 affidavit for correction and file it with the local registrar.

18 (6) Final disposition or removal from the state of Washington shall
19 not be made until authorized by the local registrar or subdeputy local
20 registrar.

21 (7) The state registrar may authorize electronic death registration
22 and create a state-wide death data base. The department may authorize
23 local registrars to access this data base under RCW 70.58.065.

24 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 2.** A new section is added to chapter 70.58 RCW
25 to read as follows:

26 The secretary of health may authorize a licensee in each funeral
27 home to serve as subdeputy registrar to initiate, sign, and file the
28 death certificate and issue the burial-transit permit. The subdeputy
29 registrar shall file the death certificate with the local registrar in

1 the registration district in which the death occurred.