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PRESS RELEASE | FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Coroner's Office Adopts New Policies to Address In-Custody and Law-Enforcement Related Deaths

NEW ORLEANS | November 10, 2014—Orleans Parish coroner, Dr. Jeffrey Rouse, unveiled new protocols for in-custody or law enforcement related deaths today to support the office's mission to serve the needs of city residents, law enforcement agencies, and other stakeholders in Orleans Parish. These efforts are a significant step in improving the transparency and accountability of the Coroner's office and improving the public's confidence in death investigations.

The guidelines apply to deaths occurring near the time of or while in custody of law enforcement; those that occur while the decedent is in jail or prison; deaths that occur as a result of use of force by law enforcement officials; and those that occur in a hospital setting for persons in custody, are under supervision of law enforcement, or who are recently released from custody or supervision.

In such cases:

- The Coroner and/or Chief Investigator will report to each scene.
- Decedents will not be removed until all related investigative agencies are notified.
- Immediate death investigation report will be filed with Coroner or Chief Investigator.
- Autopsies shall occur no later than 24 hours from the time of death.
- Outside investigative agencies will be permitted to view autopsies.
- Independent forensic pathologists will be permitted to observe autopsies.
- Finalized cases may be reviewed by the Civil Rights Division of the local FBI office.

“These changes will secure transparency and achieve trust in the operations and conclusions of the Coroner's office,” said Dr. Rouse. “No longer will anyone have to wonder about the exact nature of events regarding the death of a loved one involving police or law enforcement—as far as I'm concerned those days are over.”

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