

To law enforcement agencies and coroners:

As many deaths where an autopsy is performed require collection of evidence, it is important that we know from the investigating agency(ies) if there are specific requests for evidence collection at autopsy. Unfortunately, sometimes there is no or ineffective communication in this matter to our office prior to the autopsy. To prevent the loss of evidence at the time of autopsy, we feel it is important for you to know exactly what items of evidence we will automatically collect in standard situations (i.e., if the medical examiner's office is not told what items of evidence are requested).

**Below is the bare minimum amount and type of evidence that you can expect we will collect on certain types of cases even if we have no request from investigators.** Unless told otherwise, how clothing is bagged is at the discretion of the forensic pathologist performing the autopsy and the forensic pathologist performing the autopsy can collect more evidence than listed below on any given case if they deem it necessary. **In addition, you may always contact us to request additional evidence beyond the bare minimum listed below and we will always help facilitate that collection.** Please understand that on any given day, depending upon workload requirements especially if the collection of the evidence is particularly time consuming (e.g., individually bagging all items of clothing separately), you may be asked to have a representative(s) at the autopsy to bag the evidence yourself.

The medical examiners can be reached at the on-call cell phone: 406-329-1155, which can be used to contact the pathologist on call for either the Missoula or the Billings office. Thank you.

Suicide-GSW	Projectile
Suicide-hanging	Ligature
Homicide-GSW	Fingernail swabs (or clippings) Projectiles Clothing with defects
Motor vehicle accidents-Hit and Run	Outer clothing
Homicide-stab wound	Fingernail swabs (or clippings) Fragment of knife if found Clothing with defects Bags from hands
Homicide-strangulation/BFI	Fingernail swabs Bags from hands See suspected sexual assault below
Motor vehicle accident-occupant	None
If death involves suspected sexual assault	Fingernail swabs (or clippings) Female: oral, anal, vaginal swabs Male: oral, anal, penile swabs Undergarments

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