

# General Order

## Houston Police Department



ISSUE DATE:

NO.

August 6, 2013

600-07

REFERENCE: Supersedes all prior conflicting Circulars and Directives, and General Order 600-07, dated January 1, 1987

**SUBJECT: HANDLING DEAD BODIES EXPOSED TO PUBLIC VIEW**

### POLICY

Police officers may be called upon to handle situations in which there is a dead human body exposed to public view. The department expects officers to display the highest regard for human remains and to handle dead bodies in such a manner that also provides for a thorough criminal or forensic examination.

This General Order applies to all employees.

### 1 COVERING BODIES

A dead human body that is exposed to public view shall be protected by way of extending the crime scene to inhibit the public's view of the decedent until the arrival of personnel from the Harris County Medical Examiner's Office. Patrol vehicles or cones should also be used to obscure public view when it is not practical to extend the crime scene. Covering the body with a body sheet should only be used when it is absolutely necessary to maintain the integrity of the crime scene during extenuating circumstances (e.g., inclement weather). Officers have the discretion to cover a body if failure to do so would form the basis of a disturbance and covering it would assist in maintaining peace and order.

Body sheets used to cover a dead body shall be kept in stock in the Property Division and shall be issued to all divisions that have marked vehicles in their fleet. In addition, disposable sheets shall be issued to any other divisions as approved by their division commander.

### 2 SEARCHING BODIES

Officers shall not search a dead body without the express consent of a medical examiner or designee.

When a fatality occurs, no one may disturb or remove the body (or body parts) from the position in which it was found unless the medical examiner or designee so allows. The only exceptions to this policy are when there is no other way to preserve the body from loss or destruction or there is no other way to maintain traffic flow on a highway, across a railroad line, or at an airport.

### 3 RELATED GENERAL ORDERS

600-09, **Crash Investigations**

600-27, **Preliminary and Follow-up Investigations**

700-01, **Property/Evidence Control Regulations**



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