
STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS

1984 No. 552

The Coroners Rules 1984

PART III

POST-MORTEM EXAMINATIONS

Delay in making post-mortem to be avoided

5. Where a coroner directs or requests that a post-mortem examination shall be made, it shall be made as soon after the death of the deceased as is reasonably practicable.

Medical practitioner making post-mortem

6.—(1) In considering what legally qualified medical practitioner shall be directed or requested by the coroner to make a post-mortem examination the coroner shall have regard to the following considerations:—

- (a) the post-mortem examination should be made, whenever practicable, by a pathologist with suitable qualifications and experience and having access to laboratory facilities;
- (b) if the coroner is informed by the chief officer of police that a person may be charged with the murder, manslaughter or infanticide of the deceased, the coroner should consult the chief officer of police regarding the legally qualified medical practitioner who is to make the post-mortem examination;
- (c) if the deceased died in a hospital, the coroner should not direct or request a pathologist on the staff of, or associated with, that hospital to make a post-mortem examination if—
 - (i) that pathologist does not desire to make the examination, or
 - (ii) the conduct of any member of the hospital staff is likely to be called in question, or
 - (iii) any relative of the deceased asks the coroner that the examination be not made by such a pathologist,

unless the obtaining of another pathologist with suitable qualifications and experience would cause the examination to be unduly delayed;

- (d) if the death of the deceased may have been caused by any of the diseases or injuries within paragraph (2), the coroner should not direct or request a legally qualified medical practitioner who is a member of a pneumoconiosis medical panel to make the post-mortem examination.

(2) The diseases and injuries within this paragraph are those in connection with which duties are from time to time imposed upon pneumoconiosis medical boards by Part III of the Social Security Act 1975 and any regulations made under that Act⁽¹⁾.

(1) The relevant instrument and the instruments amending it are set out in the footnote to the definition of “industrial disease” in Rule 2(1).

Coroner to notify persons of post-mortem to be made

7.—(1) Where a coroner directs or requests a legally qualified medical practitioner to make a post-mortem examination, the coroner shall notify the persons and bodies set out in paragraph (2) of the date, hour and place at which the examination will be made, unless it is impracticable to notify any such persons or bodies or to do so would cause the examination to be unduly delayed.

(2) The persons and bodies to be notified by the coroner are as follows:—

- (a) any relative of the deceased who has notified the coroner of his desire to attend, or be represented at, the post-mortem examination;
- (b) the deceased's regular medical attendant;
- (c) if the deceased died in a hospital, the hospital;
- (d) if the death of the deceased may have been caused by any of the diseases or injuries within Rule 6(2) (other than occupational asthma), the pneumoconiosis medical panel for the area;
- (e) if the death of the deceased may have been caused by any accident or disease notice of which is required by or under any enactment to be given—
 - (i) to an enforcing authority, the appropriate inspector appointed by, or representative of, that authority; or
 - (ii) to an inspector appointed by an enforcing authority, that inspector;
- (f) any government department which has notified the coroner of its desire to be represented at the examination;
- (g) if the chief officer of police has notified the coroner of his desire to be represented at the examination, the chief officer of police.

(3) Any person or body mentioned in paragraph (2) shall be entitled to be represented at a post-mortem examination by a legally qualified medical practitioner, or if any such person is a legally qualified medical practitioner he shall be entitled to attend the examination in person; but the chief officer of police may be represented by a member of the police force of which he is chief officer.

(4) Nothing in the foregoing provisions of this Rule shall be deemed to limit the discretion of the coroner to notify any person of the date, hour and place at which a post-mortem examination will be made and to permit him to attend the examination.

Persons attending post-mortem not to interfere

8. A person attending a post-mortem examination by virtue of paragraph (3) or (4) of Rule 7 shall not interfere with the performance of the examination.

Preservation of material

9. A person making a post-mortem examination shall make provision, so far as possible, for the preservation of material which in his opinion bears upon the cause of death for such period as the coroner thinks fit.

Report on post-mortem

10.—(1) The person making a post-mortem examination shall report to the coroner in the form set out in Schedule 2 or in a form to the like effect.

(2) Unless authorised by the coroner, the person making a post-mortem examination shall not supply a copy of his report to any person other than the coroner.

Premises for post-mortems

11.—(1) No post-mortem examination shall be made in a dwelling house or in licensed premises.

(2) Every post-mortem examination shall be made in premises which are adequately equipped for the purpose of the examination.

(3) Where a person dies in a hospital possessing premises so equipped, any post-mortem examination of the body of that person shall, with the consent of the hospital authority, be made in those premises unless the coroner otherwise decides.

(4) For the purpose of this Rule no premises shall be deemed to be adequately equipped for the purpose of post-mortem examinations unless they are supplied with running water, proper heating and lighting facilities, and containers for the storing and preservation of material.