



Denver Office of the Medical Examiner (OME) Decedent Transport

The Department of Public Health and Environment is seeking approval for a capital equipment purchase of two vans. Said vans will be used for OME body transportation, an issue which has escalated to the point where an emergency purchase is being pursued. The cost of the vans exceeds the \$50,000 threshold that requires authorization for the purchase. The purchase of electric vehicle options was considered but due to the emergency need of this request are not an available option.

Current vendor: Denver Mortuary Services (DMS) is unable to provide adequate service to OME and the residents of Denver. They are currently in breach of contract as their personnel can not /will not obtain the critical security clearance through background checks needed to work for us, they don't prioritize our calls and leave us on death scenes for hours, and they do sub-standard, unacceptable work in the transport and care of decedents, all of whom deserve to be handled with dignity.

DMS is non-compliant with background checks (they cannot access badges or contractor CCD ID). This poses a significant security risk to OME and the residents of Denver by having decedent transport personnel who do not have the appropriate security clearance, resulting in an inability to transport bodies from secure areas, like the DEN tarmac. CAO has advised that DMS' lack of compliance in this area will allow us to break the contract.

DMS is responsible for significant delays in service resulting in the inability to transport bodies from very public death scenes in a timely manner. This means grossly unsafe conditions for OME employees left on dangerous and sometimes contentious death scenes with bodies for hours (often in highly inclement weather). Besides the safety issues, waiting on death scenes with dead bodies for hours also impacts the work of DPD and/or OME Investigators because they end up waiting for hours for body pick-up (we have text messages and emails with DMS discussing this issue without relief). Finally, waiting for long periods of time with families while their loved one is in a body bag is inappropriate and awkward

Another issue is the transport of decedents face down (disrespectful and changes livor mortis- may impact our death investigation and autopsy process). OME is supposed to be prioritized by the vendor, but we have evidence that we are not prioritized. We experienced the same issues existed with our last vendor (First Call) – medical examiner's offices, especially Denver, are extremely busy with many deaths and multiple pick ups in just one day.

There are no other vendors existing who would be ready and able to absorb our decedent transport even if the contract amount was increased. No other companies have bid on our recent RFP. We have reached out to other counties and can confirm that decedent transportation is a pain point for all metro area coroners.

There are many efficiencies to be made by bringing the decedent transport in-house at OME:

- The experience already exists in-house: Autopsy Supervisor James Wallace has experience with managing decedent transport at medical examiners in Florida
- Quicker response / prioritization / real time ETA will be provided
- Real time-in-house body(morgue) status within case management system
- Will assist investigator with putting decedent in body bag; Will assist with taking radiographs
- Courier Service for hospitals bloods, specimen, supplies (Grainger), Children's Hospital histology already in place with OME
- Employees will have appropriate background checks in place; Employee DNA on file for homicide cases (OME employees must have DNA submitted to DPD Crime Lab)
- Eliminate physical paperwork –direct data entry for intake process
- Photograph hospital/ancillary facility cases without investigator response

- Will assist within mass fatality incident - transportation was largest pain point during COVID
- No contract process or city council approval needed

To perform this service in-house at OME, we would need two all-wheel drive or four-wheel drive vans that could hold 4 decedents each to handle decedent transport. Fleet has offered to cover the cost of these vans. OME can cover the addition of four employees to cover 24/7/365, and these employees would be part of the Autopsy Technician Team so they would be trained to do other work during any down time, and they would have a career path at OME.