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What Are Death Certificates Used For?

The original death certificate is filed with the State Health Department. Our funeral home will obtain as many certified copies as you would like us to order on your behalf. While additional copies can typically be requested later, they may involve extra time and fees. For this reason, we generally recommend ordering two to three more copies than you expect to need.

Certified copies of the death certificate are required for a variety of legal and administrative purposes. Some institutions will retain the copy you provide, while others may scan and return it, or accept a digital version.

Important Note:

If the death occurred in Washington, D.C., please be aware that D.C. Vital Records does not allow funeral homes to reorder death certificates. If additional copies are needed later, they must be requested directly by the individual through the D.C. Vital Records office.

Organizations that often require and may retain a certified copy include:

- Probate Court/Register of Wills
- Land Offices for the Transfer of Real Property, houses and lots
- Life insurance companies
- Pension providers
- Trade of Labor Union (may require more than one copy)
- Office of Personnel Management – for all federal employees & retirees (may require more than one copy)

- Investment or Brokerage Account Holders
- Financial institutions (investment firms, stocks, bonds)
- Insured loans, credit cards or department store cards
- Government agencies handling benefits

Organizations that may return or accept a copy include:

- Financial institutions (banks, savings & loans, & credit unions)
- Social Security Administration
- Motor Vehicles Administration – transfer of automobiles, motorcycles, trailers, recreational vehicles, and campers
- Department of Natural Resources – transfer titles of boats and other watercraft
- Utility companies
- Cell phone company
- Credit card companies
- Healthcare providers
- Bank for entry into safety deposit vault/box
- IRS - filing income tax return
- State Comptroller - filing income tax return
- Embassy (for foreign nationals)
- Employer – to qualify for bereavement leave or compensation
- Personal requests from children or other relatives
- Estimated Total Number*

