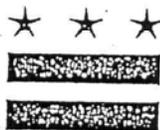


# APPENDIX 7:

GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA  
Office of the Inspector General

Inspector General



January 31, 2003

Jonathan L. Arden, M.D.  
Chief Medical Examiner  
Office of the Chief Medical Examiner  
1910 Massachusetts Avenue, Southeast  
Washington, D.C. 20004

Dear Dr. Arden:

This is a Management Alert Report (MAR 03-I-003) to inform you of a significant issue that has come to our attention as a result of our inspection of the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner (OCME). The Office of the Inspector General (OIG) provides these reports when we believe a serious matter requires the immediate attention of a District of Columbia government official.

**Observations:**

The inspection team observed what appeared to be numerous safety and health issues during visits to the OCME facility. There are no District regulations or laws that directly relate to maintenance and safety in OCME facilities, nor does OCME have a set of written policies or procedures regarding maintenance and safety. Therefore, the inspection team referenced standards established by the National Association of Medical Examiners (NAME)<sup>1</sup> and outlined in NAME's accreditation checklist. See NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF MEDICAL EXAMINERS ACCREDITATION CHECKLIST (Checklist) (1997) (amended 2002).

First, NAME standards state that public access areas should be comfortable, clean, and free of odor. Checklist § 1H.3. However, the inspection team found that the elevator used by OCME staff and visitors has an unpleasant odor that emanates directly from the autopsy suite and/or the body cooler area.

Second, NAME standards state that work areas should be clean and well-maintained, and that employees and visitors should be safe from physical, chemical, electrical, and biological hazards. Checklist §§ 1H.2 and 2.2. During our inspection of the body cooler area, our team observed that body fluids routinely collect on the floor and that these fluids are not draining properly. As

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<sup>1</sup> NAME is the national professional organization of physician medical examiners, medical death investigators and death investigation system administrators who perform medicolegal investigations of deaths of public interest in the United States. As part of its mission to improve the quality of death investigation nationally and to recognize excellence in death investigation systems, NAME offers a voluntary inspection and accreditation program for medicolegal death investigation offices. This program is designed to offer expert evaluation and recommendations for improvement of functioning offices. The published NAME standards for a Modern Medicolegal Investigative System (<http://www.thename.org>) provide a model for jurisdictions seeking to improve death investigations.

a result, employees are required to mop the cooler floor daily. Additionally, the inspection team observed that several employees were not wearing protective masks in areas where body fluids were present.

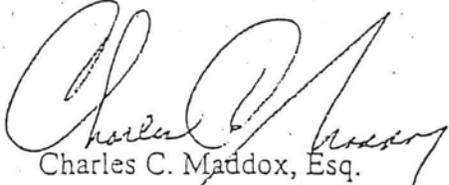
Recommendations:

1. That the Chief Medical Examiner request an inspection of the OCME facility by the District of Columbia Office of Occupational Safety and Health (D.C. OSH) to determine whether there are any hazards to employees and visitors, and if any measures can be taken to address these hazards, to include minimizing the odor referenced in this report.
2. That the Chief Medical Examiner require all employees to wear protective masks in areas where they may be exposed to body fluids.

Please provide your comments to this MAR by February 14, 2003. Your response should include actions taken or planned, dates for completion of planned actions, and reasons for any disagreement with the concerns and recommendations presented. Please distribute this Management Alert Report to only those personnel who will be directly involved in preparing your response.

Should you have questions or desire a conference prior to preparing your response, please contact [REDACTED], Director of Planning and Inspections, 202-727-8490.

Sincerely,



Charles C. Maddox, Esq.  
Inspector General

CCM/LP/MLC/jcs

cc: Mr. John A. Koskinen, City Administrator, Office of the City Administrator  
Mr. James Jacob, Director, Office of Risk Management  
Ms. Margret Kellems, Deputy Mayor, Public Safety and Justice