

Why do I need a death certificate?

One of the most important documents you need to settle the affairs of your loved one is a death certificate. The death certificate is the official legal record of death. It includes information about the person who died and about their cause of death. Insurance companies, the Social Security Administration, and other agencies may request certified copies of the death certificate as proof of death. Certified copies are printed on special paper that cannot be easily duplicated.

How do I order a death certificate?

The funeral home can order death certificates for you from the county or state vital records office.

If you wish to order directly, certified copies of the certificate of death may be purchased from county or state vital records offices, depending on how long ago the person died. The fee for the first copy is \$20.00 and additional copies of the same record ordered at the same time are \$15.00 each.

If the death occurred less than six months ago, contact the vital records office in the county where

the death occurred. Contact information is available from the state vital records office at (503) 731-4108.

If the death occurred more than six months ago, order the certificate from the state vital records office. You may order the death certificate in person, by mail, the Internet, fax, or telephone. When ordering by the Internet, fax, or phone, a credit card is required and there is an extra fee for this service.

In person:

Oregon Vital Records
800 NE Oregon St., Suite 205
Portland, Oregon 97232-2162

Mail orders to:

Oregon Vital Records
P.O. Box 14050
Portland, Oregon 97293-0050

Internet: www.vitalchek.com

Fax orders: 503-234-8417

Phone orders: 503-731-4108

How are the fees used?

Fees for vital records support **all** the services provided by state and county vital records offices. These services include:

Filing and storing certificates...

Each vital event - birth, marriage, divorce, and death - that occurs in Oregon is registered and filed with the state vital records office. Birth and death records are first registered at the local vital records office in the county where the event occurred and then filed permanently with the state.

Death certificates have been filed with the state vital records office since 1903. Currently, the state vital records office files just over 31,000 death certificates per year. The vital records offices are responsible for making certain that the certificates have complete information, are numbered and indexed so each certificate can be easily found, and are stored safely and securely. Any changes that are made to the records at any time must be documented and tracked.

Currently, the state vital records office is responsible for maintaining over 5 million vital records.

Screening and processing orders for certificates...

The vital records office processes and screens all orders for vital records, including death certificates. Over 160,000 vital records orders are processed each year. All orders are screened to make sure that persons ordering the records are eligible to receive them. This screening is required because death certificates are confidential and access is restricted to specific persons. In the case of death certificates, access is restricted for 50 years after the date of death to family members and their legal representatives, persons or organizations with a personal or property right, and government agencies. Death records become public 50 years after the date of death.

Analyzing data from vital records...

Some of the most important information about the health of Oregonians comes from death certificates. For example, the number of people who died from cancer or heart disease is calculated from death certificates. Information from each birth, marriage, divorce, or death

certificate is entered and maintained in a computer file. We can then analyze the combined data records and publish the findings without identifying individual names. This information is useful in determining where to focus resources to improve health and prevent premature deaths.

Please visit our web site at www.healthoregon.org/chs for more information about the services provided by Oregon Vital Records.

**If you need this information in alternate format, please contact:
Linda Reynolds, (503) 731-4027**

The Certificate of Death



**Oregon Vital Records
Center for Health Statistics
800 NE Oregon Street, Suite 205
Portland, Oregon 97232
503-731-4108
503-731-4084 fax**