

**CHECKLIST · AFTER A DEATH**

THE FIRST 48 HOURS

WHAT CANNOT WAIT, AND WHAT WE CARRY.

You do not have to do all of this today, and you do not have to do it alone. This is the short list of practical steps that protect your family's rights in the first two days, written for the person who has to hold everything together right now. Everything else can wait until you are ready.

WHAT TO DO TODAY

- ☐ **Ask which agency has the report, and get the case number and the investigator's name**
The hospital, the coroner's office, or the officer who came to the door can tell you. Write it down; you will be asked for it many times.
 - ☐ **Do not give a statement to any insurance company, including the other driver's**
They may call within a day, kindly. You are not required to speak with them. Give them our number, or nothing.
 - ☐ **Do not authorize the release, repair, or salvage of any vehicle involved**
The car is evidence. Its data recorder holds speed and braking. Tell the tow yard and the insurer to hold it.
 - ☐ **Keep the phone, the wallet, and the belongings as they are**
Including damaged clothing. Do not delete anything from the phone.
 - ☐ **Ask one person to write down what is known about what happened**
While it is fresh: who called, what the officer said, who was there. It does not have to be complete.
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WHAT TO DO THIS WEEK

☐ **Order certified death certificates, more than you think you need**

The funeral home usually orders them, and the county registrar issues more later. Banks, insurers, employers, and the court each want an original.

☐ **Locate the will or trust, and any life insurance policies**

Employer-provided life insurance is common and often forgotten. Ask HR.

☐ **Notify the employer and ask about unpaid wages, leave balances, and benefits**

Ask for it in writing.

☐ **Keep every funeral, burial, and travel receipt**

Funeral and burial expenses are recoverable in a wrongful death claim under the California jury instructions.

☐ **If a city vehicle, a bus, a road condition, or any public agency was involved, note it now**

A claim against a public entity must be presented in writing within six months under Government Code 911.2. Everything else has two years from the date of death.

☐ **Decide who will speak for the family with the insurers and the lawyer**

One voice. Code of Civil Procedure 377.60 sets who may bring the claim, usually the spouse, domestic partner, and children, and we walk you through it on the first call.

General information, not legal advice for your situation. Contacting us does not create an attorney-client relationship, which is formed only by a signed written fee agreement.

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Written and reviewed by Josh Kohanim, Esq., California Bar No. 328609. Reviewed September 9, 2026. This website is for general information and is not legal advice. Contacting us does not create an attorney-client relationship, which is formed only by a signed written fee agreement. No attorney's fee unless we recover. Costs and expenses may apply and are disclosed in writing before representation begins. Prior results do not guarantee a similar outcome.

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