

Important notice concerning the storage of dead bodies at public mortuaries (Category A)

- (1) Decomposition of a dead body is an inevitable natural phenomenon. The degree of decomposition of a particular dead body upon arrival at the public mortuary and the rate of subsequent decomposition depend on various individual factors, including the length of time between the death and the arrival of the body at the mortuary, environmental temperature and humidity during that period, and the medical cause of death.
- (2) Cold chambers of public mortuaries are designed for **short-term storage** of dead bodies only. **Storing a dead body in a cold chamber can only slow down decomposition over a short period; further decomposition of the dead body cannot be prevented.** Therefore, storing a dead body at a public mortuary over a long period will inevitably cause deterioration of the facial and overall appearance of the deceased. In general, storage of dead bodies for over **a week** will result in higher chance of the bodies showing changes in overall appearance due to further decomposition, **such as changes of skin colour or even mold formation.**
- (3) Furthermore, the number of storage racks of public mortuaries is limited. When storage racks in a public mortuary run out, some dead bodies may have to be stored at other available spaces inside the cold chambers, or be removed to another mortuary for storage.
- (4) Therefore, **please arrange for collection of the dead body as soon as practicable.**

Forensic Pathology Service
Department of Health