



What Do I Do Now?

A Helpful Guide and Resource Book from the
Garfield County Coroner's Office

Investigator: _____

Garfield County Coroner's Office
1806 Medicine Bow Court
Silt, Colorado 81652
(970) 665-6335





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Garfield County Coroner's Office Contact Information

Address: 1806 Medicine Bow Court, Silt, Colorado 81652 

Office: (970) 665-6335 

On-Call: (970) 319-0311 

Fax: (970) 876-1931 

Email: coroner@garfield-county.com 

Website: www.garfield-county.com/coroner 

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- An investigator is available at all times by calling the on-call phone number listed above. Please use this number for urgent matters.
 - For routine inquiries, you can contact an investigator at the office number provided above. If an investigator is unable to answer the phone, please leave a detailed message and we will get back to you as soon as possible.
 - The investigator that was on scene may have provided a business card with their direct contact information. If you are unable to reach them, it may mean they are unavailable and/or on their days off. Please call the office number for inquiries if you are unable to reach the scene investigator.
 - If you need to meet with an investigator in person, the Coroner's Office is open to the public from 8am-5pm, Monday through Friday. Due to the dynamic role of the Coroner's Office, investigators may not be available to meet in person during normal business hours. We highly recommend calling the Coroner's Office to schedule an appointment to meet with an investigator.
 - You may also email an investigator at coroner@garfield-county.com

Letter from the Coroner

On behalf of the team at the Garfield County Coroner's Office, I offer my sincerest condolences to you for the loss of your loved one. The Garfield County Coroner's Office is here to help you through this difficult process as you navigate the days ahead.

We have designed this handbook as a guide and resource for you to refer to as you ask yourself: *What do I do now?* Often, the days following a loved one's death is uncharted for many people. The Coroner's Office works everyday with families in similar situations and investigators can provide insight on questions you will likely encounter.

The Coroner's Office role is to perform an inquiry into the cause and manner of your loved one's death. This inquiry is extremely important. The inquiry and subsequent determination for cause and manner of death are independent of any other agency. We work on behalf of the deceased to determine the truth about their death.

The **Cause of Death** is the injury, disease, or combination of the two that was responsible for initiating the train of physiological disturbances (brief or prolonged), which produced the fatal outcome.

The **Manner of Death** refers to the circumstances in which the cause of death arose (suicide, natural causes, accident, and homicide). It is often a misconception that the responsibility for determining these vital questions lies with the law enforcement agency; however, this is the responsibility of the Coroner.

When the Coroner's Office is performing an inquiry into a death, our goal is to be available, professional, compassionate, and timely during the entire process of the inquiry. Investigators are assigned on call 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. We are always available to take your call, answer your question, or hear your concern. You can reach an investigator by calling the office at (970) 665-6335 or by the information contained in this guide.

You may also call me at any time with compliments, questions, or feedback.

With heartfelt sympathy,



Robert Glassmire, Coroner

Cell: (970) 309-1042

Frequently Asked Questions

In the hopes of helping you through this often confusing time, here are some questions family members have asked after the passing of a loved one. Please understand that every investigation is different and some of this information may change pending each case.

Q: Why is the Coroner Involved?

A: The Coroner's Office is required to investigate any sudden or unexpected deaths, all deaths not attended by a physician, any deaths occurring within 24-hours of a hospital admission, any deaths involved in a possible crime, and any suspicious deaths. The Coroner determines circumstances, manner, and cause of death. The Coroner's Office inquiry is independent from any law enforcement agency with the purpose of determining the cause and manner of death.

Q: Who is the legal next-of-kin?

A: Colorado's Revised Statutes identifies that the legal next-of-kin is designated to the following person(s): Personal representative or special administrator of the deceased individual's estate, the surviving spouse of the deceased (if not legally separated), a majority of the deceased's surviving adult children, a majority of the deceased's parents or legal guardians, or a majority of the deceased's surviving adult siblings.

Q: Where is my loved one being taken?

A: The investigator is taking your loved one to the Garfield County Coroner's Office in Silt, CO. Your loved one will remain in the care of the Coroner's Office until legal next-of-kin has chosen a funeral home for the final arrangements. There is no cost to the family for Coroner's Office services.

Q: What do I do now?

A: When you feel you are able to, you should:

Talk with family and friends for support through this difficult time. Start thinking of final arrangements (funeral, burial, cremation, etc.). Then contact a funeral home of your choice. On page 14 in this booklet, you will find information of funeral homes the Coroner's Office commonly works with, however, the Coroner's Office cannot make recommendations and you are free to choose which ever funeral home works best for you and your family. We do recommend contacting multiple funeral homes prior to making any final decisions. See pages 8 and 10 for helpful checklists regarding immediate concerns and other persons to contact.

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: My loved one had property on or with him/her. How do I get these items back?

A: In most circumstances all clothing your loved one was wearing at the time of their death will be released to the mortuary with your loved one's body. Personal effects (example: jewelry, wallet, electronics) will be stored at the Coroner's Office for safekeeping until it can be returned. If you are the deceased individual's legal next-of-kin, you may call the Coroner's Office and make arrangements to obtain the property. Please call the Coroner's Office ahead of time to make an appointment.

Q: What about organ/tissue or whole-body donation?

A: The deceased individual must meet certain criteria to be eligible for organ, tissue, and/or whole-body donation. Additionally, deaths under the investigation of the Coroner's Office will require the approval of Coroner staff for donation to proceed. Sometimes the circumstances of the death will prevent donation from occurring. With the consent from the legal next of kin, donation will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis. Donor Alliance and/or Rocky Mountain Lyons Eye Bank may be contacting the legal next-of-kin for additional information.

Q: How long will it take for the Coroner's Office to release my relative/friend?

A: Generally, it should not take more than two or three business days. The Coroner will advise you if there are circumstances that may delay the release. Your funeral home will coordinate the release on your behalf. The Coroner's Office will not release the decedent until we have a verbal confirmation from the legal next of kin.

Q: Will an autopsy be performed and if so, how much does it cost?

A: The Coroner determines whether or not an autopsy will be performed. An autopsy is performed in most non-natural deaths, when the cause or manner of death cannot be substantiated, or when the circumstances of death require forensic documentation for prosecution or other reasons. There is no charge for any Coroner's Office service. All autopsies are performed by a board-certified forensic pathologist.

Q: My loved one had an autopsy. How do I get a copy of the autopsy report?

A: You can request an autopsy report by sending an email to coroner@garfield-county.com or by calling (970) 665-6335. Upon request, autopsy reports may be emailed to the decedent's next of kin when they are completed.

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: What do I do if I cannot afford to pay for final arrangements?

A: If you cannot afford burial/cremation arrangements you may qualify for monetary assistance through county programs. Contact Social Services for the county in which your loved one resided. Funeral home establishments may have more information regarding monetary assistance through insurances. If your loved one was a veteran, you may contact Veteran's Affairs for funeral assistance that may be available to you.

There are also alternative final arrangements available that your loved one may qualify for, such as medical research and donation. These programs involve little to no costs, however, they do have time constraints. On page 14 in this booklet there are a few donation programs that the Coroner's Office commonly works with.

Q: What if my loved one's death was a homicide or a crime was involved?

A: In determining the manner of death, the Garfield County Coroner's Office adheres to the principles in the NAME (National Association of Medical Examiners) "A guide For Manner of Death Classification."^[1] The manner of death is a medical classification for statistical purposes and any manner of death certification has no bearing on criminal justice proceedings, or if law enforcement, or a prosecutor should or should not charge a person for a violation of criminal statute.

The 9th Judicial District Crime Victim Compensation Board provides financial compensation to any person who is victimized by violent crime. If the death of your loved one had something to do with a crime, you may be able to apply for victim compensation. Please visit <http://www.9daco.org/victimcompensation.html> to see eligibility requirements and to file a claim.

Q: Where/how do I obtain a death certificate?

A: Generally, the funeral home that handles your loved one's arrangements will order and provide the death certificates. There is a charge for certified copies. Death certificates are also available through the State Vital Records Office or the Local Vital Records Office. Please know the Coroner's Office does not provide families with copies of death certificates.

Vital Records Section, Colorado Department of Public Health

(303) 692-2200

Vital.records@state.co.us

<https://www.colorado.gov/pacific/cdphe/vital-records-contact>

Vital Records Office, Garfield County

Garfield County Clerk & Recorder

(970) 384-3700

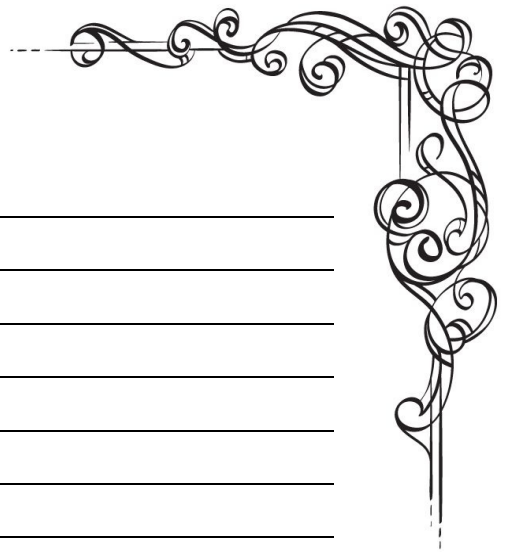
<https://www.garfield-county.com/clerk-recorder/death-certificates/>

^[1] Hanzlick, R., Hunsaker, J. C., & Davis, G. G. J. (n.d.). *A Guide for Manner of Death Classification* (First). National Association of Medical Examiners.

Immediate Concerns Checklist

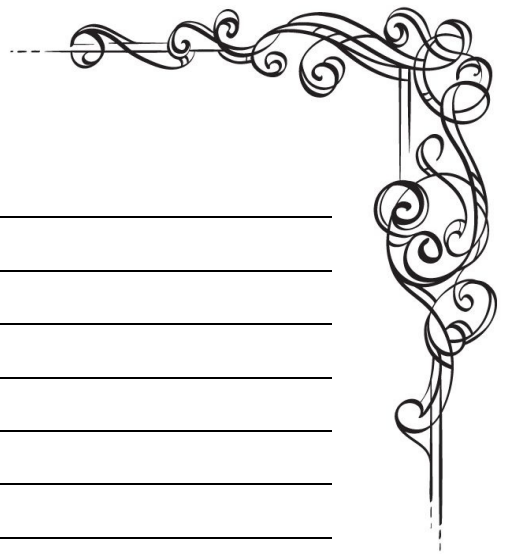
Immediate Considerations in the First 24 Hours After a Death

- ☐ Start gathering your support system around you. Call in key members of your family, friends, and neighbors.
- ☐ Ask a few trusted people to come over and help you with phone calls and/or meals.
- ☐ Make childcare arrangements with a trusted person, if needed, for a short while.
- ☐ Assign a trusted person to manage the phone calls, the door and inquiries about the death or situation for you.
- ☐ Write down any information or details you need to remember. Please use the notes section of this handbook.
- ☐ Keep the Coroner's Office Investigators name and number available.
- ☐ Try to get some rest and start thinking about your health. Avoid alcohol, and drink lots of water to keep hydrated.
- ☐ Inform children of the deceased about the death. Be honest with them.
- ☐ Contact funeral homes to make arrangements for final disposition.
(Resources on page 14)
- ☐ If you are the next of kin, locate the Will or Testament as soon as possible, and keep it safe.
- ☐ Arrange for the care and safety of pets.
- ☐ Contact an environmental clean-up company if needed. (Resources on page 15)
- ☐ Contact the deceased's employer or school (if applicable).
- ☐ Cancel any appointments the deceased may have pending during the month.
- ☐ Contact your lawyer if your family has been working with a lawyer regarding items such as trusts, wills etc.
- ☐ Get in touch with your religious support group if applicable.
- ☐ Contact your physician if you are having trouble eating or sleeping after the first 24 hours.
- ☐ Give yourself and others permission to grieve in their own way.

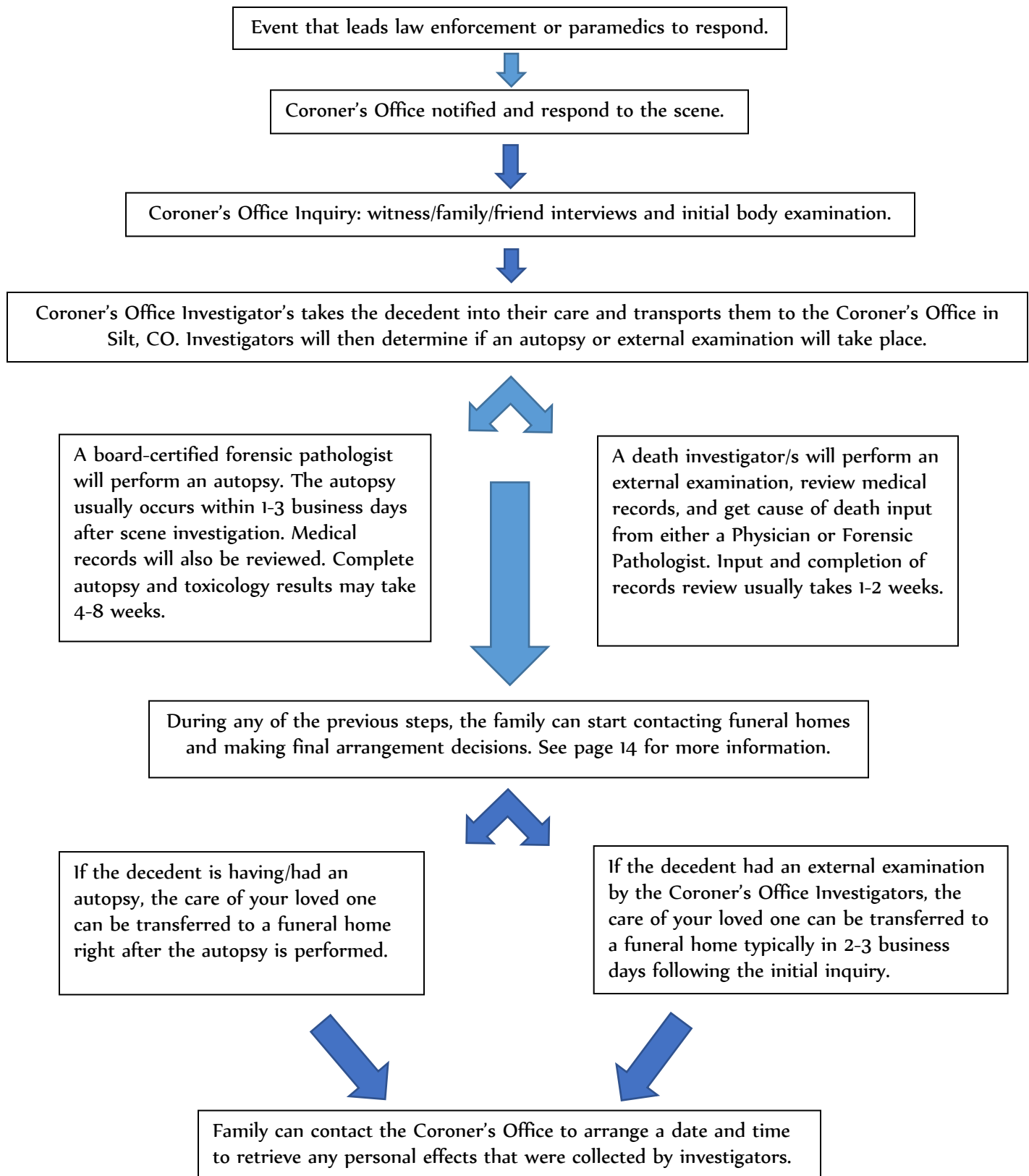
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Institutions or Persons to Contact

- ☐ Police: to occasionally check the house of deceased, if vacant
- ☐ Attorney: to learn how to transfer assets and assist with probate issues
- ☐ Utility companies: to alter or discontinue service
- ☐ Employer: to notify of death and learn of benefits
- ☐ Hospitals: to notify and cancel any upcoming appointments for the decedent
- ☐ Newspaper: to stop subscription and/or submit an obituary
- ☐ Post office: if necessary, to forward mail
- ☐ Bank: to locate accounts and safe deposit box
- ☐ Insurance agent: to obtain claim forms
- ☐ Social Services: to learn of benefits
- ☐ Social Security: to stop monthly checks and learn of potential benefits
- ☐ Veterans Affairs: to stop monthly checks and learn of benefits
- ☐ Agency providing pension services: to stop monthly check and obtain claim forms
- ☐ Accountant or tax preparer: to determine whether to file an estate tax return or final income tax return
- ☐ Investment professionals: to obtain information on holdings/assets

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Investigation Flow Chart



Investigation Outline

1. Event that leads law enforcement or paramedics to respond.
2. Coroner's Office notified and respond to the scene.
3. Coroner's Office Inquiry: During this step investigators will be speaking with family/friends/witnesses to inquiry about medical and social history as well as details about the events leading up to the incident. The initial examination of the deceased will take place during this time and investigators will also capture photographs of the scene. If warranted, investigators may collect personal effects, evidence, and medications.
4. Investigators will then take the decedent into their care and transport the deceased to the Garfield County Coroner's Office.
5. Coroner's Office Investigators will then determine if an autopsy will or will not need to be performed.
 - a. If an autopsy is warranted, it will occur within 1-3 business days after initial inquiry. Medical records will also be reviewed.
 - i. Complete autopsy and toxicology results may take 4-8 weeks.
We understand and acknowledge that it may be difficult to wait that long, however, we assure you we are being as thorough as possible.
 - b. If an autopsy is not warranted, investigators will perform an in-depth external examination, medical records review, and cause of death input from either a primary care physician, attending physician, or forensic pathologist.
 - i. Input and completion of records review usually takes 1-2 weeks.
6. During any of the previous steps, the next of kin can start contacting funeral homes and making final arrangement decisions. See page 14 for more information on funeral homes.
 - a. If the deceased had an autopsy, they may be transferred to the care of a funeral home directly after the autopsy is performed.
 - b. If the deceased did not have an autopsy, their care can be transferred to a funeral home usually in 2-3 business days following the initial inquiry.
7. Family can contact the Coroner's Office to arrange a date and time to retrieve any personal effects that were collected by investigators. This may occur shortly after the initial inquiry, however, there may be circumstances that warrant the coroner's office to safe keep items for a longer period.

Final Arrangement Options

The following is a list of funeral homes, mortuaries, and cremation facilities in the surrounding counties. Families and designees are not limited to a mortuary from this list. Any mortuary may be contacted and can arrange for final disposition. Valuable information regarding funeral services can be found on the website for the Federal Trade Commission (www.ftc.gov) under consumer protection.

Brown's Cremation Service	904 N 7th St. Grand Junction, CO 81505 https://www.brownscremationservice.com/	970-255-8888
Callahan Edfast Mortuary	2515 Patterson Rd, Grand Junction, CO 81505 https://www.dignitymemorial.com/	970-243-2450
Clifton Funeral Home	3196 Mesa Avenue, Grand Junction, CO 81504 https://www.affordablememorialcare.net/	970-628-1458
Eternal Peace Funeral Services	Silt, CO 81652 brendaarredondolegacy@gmail.com	970-876-4059
Farnum Holt Funeral Home	405 W 7th Street, Glenwood Springs, CO 81601 https://www.farnumholtfuneralhome.com/	970-945-5815
Funeral and Cremation Care of Colorado	1400 Access Road, Rifle, CO 81650	970-366-1874
Grant Mortuary & Crematory	345 6 th Street, Meeker, CO https://www.dignitymemorial.com/	970-878-9977
Legacy Funeral Home	3196 Mesa Avenue, Grand Junction, CO 81504 https://www.legacyfuneralhomegj.com/	970-609-2233
Martin Mortuary	550 North Ave, Grand Junction, CO 81501 https://www.dignitymemorial.com/	970-243-1538
Rifle Funeral Home	1400 Access Road, Rifle, CO 81650 https://www.riflefuneralhome.com/	970-625-1234
Snyder Grand Valley Memorials	292 64 ¼ Road., Grand Junction, CO 81503 https://www.snydergrandvalleymemorials.com/	970-242-2020
Taylor Funeral Services	682 1725 Road, Delta, CO 81416 https://taylorfuneralservice.com/	970-874-9988

Donation Programs:

Colorado Mesa University	1100 North Avenue, Grand Junction, CO 81506 https://www.coloradomesa.edu/forensic-investigation-research-station/donations.html	970-248-1219
Tomorrow Link	1982 S. Bannock St. Denver, CO 80223 https://www.tomorrowlink.org/	720-779-8677
Science Care	https://www.sciencecare.com/	800-417-3747

Scene and Biohazard Clean Up

It is the responsibility of the family or next of kin to select and make arrangements with a cleaning company. The following is a list of clean up companies. Families and designees are not limited to a company from this list. Any cleaning company may be contacted.

AD Valor Technical Cleaning	https://valortechnicalcleaning.com/	970-340-1760
Aftermath	8200 East Pacific Place Unit #209, Denver, CO 80231 https://www.aftermath.com/	720-214-3645
Biohazard & Restoration Specialists	Grand Junction, CO 81501 https://biohazardandrestoration.com/	970-261-1388
Crime Scene Cleaners	1849 South Acoma Street, Denver, CO 8023 https://www.crimescenecleanersco.com/	303-777-0190
ECOS Environmental & Disaster Restoration, Inc.	6690 Highway 82, Glenwood Springs, CO 81601 https://ecosenvironmental.com/	970-945-4407
Restoration 1	826 North Crest Drive Suite A., Grand Junction, CO 81506 https://www.restoration1.com/	970-251-0879
Rocky Mountain Biohazard	992 South 4th Ave Suite 100-144, Brighton, CO 80601 https://rockymountainbiohazard.com/	303-816-8360
SERVPRO of Garfield & Pitkin Counties	826 21 1/2 Road, Grand Junction, CO 81501 https://www.servprogarfieldpitkincounties.com/	970-618-1516



Local Law Enforcement and Fire Services

Law Enforcement

Carbondale Police Department		970-963-2662
Colorado State Patrol	Glenwood Springs Office Craig Dispatch	970-945-6198 970-824-6501
Garfield County Sheriff's Office	Glenwood Springs Office Rifle Annex Office	970-945-0453 970-665-0200
Glenwood Springs Police Department		970-384-6500
New Castle Police Department		970-984-2302
Parachute Police Department		970-285-7630
Rifle Police Department		970-665-6500
Silt Police Department		970-876-2735
Garfield County Communications Authority (Dispatch)		970-625-8095
Ninth Judicial District Attorney's Office		970-945-9789

Fire/EMS Services

De Beque Fire Protection District	970-283-8632
Carbondale and Rural Fire Protection District	970-963-2491
Colorado River Fire Rescue	970-625-1243
Glenwood Springs Fire Protection District	970-384-6480
Grand Valley Fire Protection District	970-285-9119



Counseling/Crisis Support Services

Aspen Hope Center	https://ourhopecenter.org/	(970) 925-5858
Colorado Crisis Services	https://coloradocrisiservices.org/	(844) 493-8255 Text TALK to 38255
Mind Springs Health	https://www.mindspringshealth.org/	(888) 207-4004
National Suicide Prevention Lifeline	https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org/	(800) 273-8255
Veteran's Crisis Line	https://www.veteranscrisisline.net/	(800) 273-8255 PRESS 1 Text: 838255

Note: All crisis lines are available 24/7

The Suicide Prevention Coalition of Garfield County is a community-led coalition with a goal to increase education and awareness regarding suicide. Through education and partnership with our community, they hope to increase suicide prevention knowledge and skills as well as decreasing stigma. Even if the death you are dealing with is not related to suicide, this is a great resource to use for other contacts for support services. For more details please visit: <http://www.suicidepreventiongarfieldcounty.org/>

