



NYC Health Department Begins Audit of Death Certificates

The Bureau of Vital Statistics recently began an audit of NYC death certificates and identified several instances of suspected fraud by funeral home staff. It is a violation of the NYC Health Code to forge the signature of a physician or to ask a doctor to pre-sign blank or incomplete paper certificates. Notices of Violation are being sent to several funeral homes that allegedly forged a physician's signature. If these funeral homes are found guilty by the NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene's Administrative Tribunal, fines of up to \$2,000 per violation may be levied.

During this audit, the Bureau also found that a number of medical facilities and funeral homes were in violation of NYC Health Code §205.03, which stipulates that a certificate must be filed within 72 hours of death. Death certificates must be filed timely whether or not the family has made a decision on disposition. If remains are to be stored for longer than four days, the Office of Vital Records must be notified of the location and method of disposition. You must file the certificate and indicate "interim disposition" as well as the address of the location. A correction request must be filed once a decision has been made on final disposition.

If you have any questions about these policies, please contact Richard Genovese, Manager of Special Projects, at 212-788-4585.