

# Modern Death Investigation Pennsylvania Coroner's Basic Education Course



13-18 December, 2021  
Harrisburg, PA

Sponsored by  
HD Forensics, LLC  
Mercyhurst University, Erie, PA



## Syllabus

---

### Monday, Dec 13. The Office of the Pennsylvania Coroner: Roles, Duties, Nuts and Bolts

7:30-8:00		Registration
8:00-8:30		Introduction, Course Content (Dirkmaat)
8:30-9:00	1	History of Coroner/Medical Examiner System in the US (Dirkmaat)
9:00-10:00	2	Roles and Duties of the Coroner, Part I (Kiessler)
10:00-10:15		Break
10:15-11:30	3	Roles and Duties of the Coroner, Part II (Kiessler)
11:30-12:30		Lunch
12:30-1:30	4	Pennsylvania State Statutes and Laws for the Coroner's Office (Shanaman)
1:30-3:00	5	Types of Deaths Investigated by the Coroner's Office (Lynn)
3:00-3:15		Break
3:15-5:00	6	Mass Fatality Preparedness, Lessons Learned from the Mass Shooting in Las Vegas (Fudenberg)
5:00-6:00	7	International Association of Coroners and Medical Examiners Accreditation (Fudenberg)

### Tuesday, Dec. 14. Investigation of Accidental Deaths and the Indoor Crime Scene

8:00-9:00	8	Fatal Motor Vehicle Accidents (Gay)
9:00-10:30	9	Drugs: The New Epidemic (Gay)
10:30-10:45		Break
10:45-11:30	10	Right to Know/Filling out the Death Certificate (Gay)
11:30-12:30		Lunch
12:30-2:00	11	Role of Law Enforcement in Death Investigations (Lench)
2:00-2:15		Break
2:15-4:30	12	Investigating the Indoor Crime Scene (Hochrein, Jester)
4:30-4:45		Break
4:45-6:00	13	Investigating the Indoor Crime Scene: Mock Scene (Hochrein and Jester)

### Wednesday, Dec. 15. Recovery of Physical Evidence and Context at the Outdoor Crime Scene

8:00-10:00	14	Outdoor Crime Scene Reconstruction; Surface Scattered Cases (Dirkmaat)
10:00-10:15		Break
10:15-11:30	15	Recovery of Buried Body Cases (Hochrein)
11:30-12:30		Lunch
12:30-1:30	17	Fatal Fire Scene Recovery (Dirkmaat)
1:30-2:15	18	Forensic Entomology (Sorkin) -zoom-
2:15-2:30		Break
2:30-4:00	19	Mass Disaster Scene Recovery and Victim ID Considerations (Dirkmaat and Adserias)
4:00-6:00	20	Role of NTSB in Mass Disaster Events (Kontanis)

### Thursday, Dec. 16. Recovery of Evidence at the Medicolegal Autopsy

8:00-9:00	<b>21</b>	Introduction to Autopsy and Forensic Pathology (Johnson)
9:00-10:00	<b>22</b>	Postmortem Interval and Natural Disease (Johnson)
10:15-11:30		Break
11:30-12:30	<b>23</b>	Toxicology and Pediatrics (Johnson)
12:30-2:00		Lunch
2:00-2:15	<b>24</b>	Gunshot Wounds (Mazuchowski)
2:15-4:15	<b>25</b>	Blunt Force Trauma (Mazuchowski)
4:15-4:30		Break
4:30-5:45	<b>26</b>	Sharp Force Injuries and Asphyxia (Mazuchowski)

### Friday, Dec. 17. Establishing Identification, Special Forensic Cases and Court

8:00-9:45	<b>27</b>	Forensic DNA Analysis (Young)
9:45-10:00		Break
10:00-11:30	<b>28</b>	Forensic Odontology (Adserias)
11:30-12:30		Lunch
12:30-1:30	<b>29</b>	Cadaver Dog (Ackerman)
1:30-3:00	<b>30</b>	Forensic Anthropology (Adserias and Dirkmaat)
3:00-3:15		Break
3:45-5:45	<b>31</b>	Rulings on Cause and Manner of Death and Case Studies (Conner)

### Saturday, Dec. 18. Special Considerations and Overview of the Coroner's Office

8:00-9:00	<b>32</b>	Preparing for Court (Conner)
9:00-10:00	<b>33</b>	Mental Health in the Coroner's Office (Conner)
8:00-9:00	<b>34</b>	Case Studies, Review, Questions (Conner, Dirkmaat, Adserias)
9:00-10:00		Break
10:00-11:00		<b>Examination</b>

## Course Directors

---

Dennis C. Dirkmaat, Ph.D., D-ABFA. Applied Forensic Sciences Dept, Mercyhurst University, Erie, PA; HD Forensics  
Joe Adserias-Garriga, Ph.D., D-ABFO. Applied Forensic Sciences Dept., Mercyhurst University, Erie, PA; HD Forensics

## Instructors

---

- a. John Ackerman. D-ABMDI. Deputy Coroner Westmoreland Co, PA.
- b. Jeff Conner D-ABMDI, Coroner Franklin Co, PA.
- c. John Fudenberg, D-ABMDI, Executive Director, International Association of Coroners and Medical Examiners, Las Vegas, NV.
- d. Pam Gay. RN, CFN, D-ABMDI. Coroner York Co, PA.
- e. Michael J. Hochrein, Sp. Ag, FBI, (ret.) LaRoche College, Pittsburgh, PA; HD Forensics.
- f. Todd Jester. Applied Forensic Specialist at Precision Laser & Instrument, Inc.
- g. Michael W. Johnson, MD, PhD, Forensic Pathologist, Forensic Pathology Associates, Allentown, PA.
- h. Chuck Kiessling, Coroner Lycoming Co, PA.
- i. Elias Kontanis, Ph.D., Chief, Transportation Disaster Assistance Division, NTSB, Washington.
- j. Scott Lynn. Coroner Montour Co, PA.
- k. Edward L Mazuchowski, MD, PhD Forensic Pathologist, Forensic Pathology Associates, Allentown, PA.
- l. Cpl Christine Lench. PSP (ret.). Department of Applied Forensic Sciences, Mercyhurst University, PA.
- m. Susan Shanaman, Attorney for the Pennsylvania State Coroners Association.
- n. Lou Sorkin. Forensic Entomologist, Entsul Associates. Entomologist, American Museum of Natural History, New York.
- o. Arthur W. Young, B.S., F-ABC, Guardian Forensic Sciences, Abington, PA.