

OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL

DON SIEGELMAN
ATTORNEY GENERAL
STATE OF ALABAMA

OCT 8 1987

ALABAMA STATE HOUSE
11 SOUTH UNION STREET
MONTGOMERY, ALABAMA 36130
AREA (205) 261-7300

Honorable Norman D. Holman
Coroner
Henry County
P.O. Box 205
Headland, Alabama 36345

Coroners - Autopsy - Public
Records

Autopsy reports prepared by
State Department of Forensic
Science and Coroner's reports
are public records.

Dear Mr. Holman:

You have requested an opinion from this office which
opinion request reads as follows:

"From time to time I am called
upon by insurance companies for
copies of Coroner's Reports and
Autopsy reports (autopsies done by
the State Dept. of Forensic Science).
I would like an opinion from your
office on whether I should give out
these reports, particularly autopsy
reports. Also, would there be any
difference in giving out the reports
on natural deaths and accidents as
opposed to homicide cases?"

Autopsy reports done by the State Department of
Forensic Science are public records. State law
specifically provides that such reports are open to
public inspection. Code of Alabama 1975, § 36-18-2.

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Coroner's reports would likewise be public records and would be open to public inspection. Code of Alabama 1975 § 36-12-40.

Such records could be withheld from public inspection only when disclosure would be detrimental to the best interests of the public. Stone v. Consolidated Pub. Co., 404 So.2d 678 (Ala. 1981). For example, if the release of such reports would compromise a criminal investigation or prosecution they could be withheld from the public. Informal Opinion of the Attorney General, No. 84-00118.

I hope I have satisfactorily answered your inquiry with regard to this matter.

Sincerely,

DON SIEGELMAN
ATTORNEY GENERAL
By:


JACK M. CURTIS
ASSISTANT ATTORNEY GENERAL

DS/JMC/vj