



The main role of the [Montana Medical Examiner's Office](#), a section in the Montana Department of Justice's Forensic Science Division, is to support the county coroners in the state of Montana with autopsies, consultation, and education.

While each of the 56 Montana county coroner's offices are the primary agency responsible for death investigation in their respective county, handling all scene investigation and direct communication regarding the death with families, law enforcement, and other interested parties, the medical examiners can assume jurisdiction on any death if necessary.

The Forensic Science Division and Montana Medical Examiner's office provide support for the entire state through two locations: Missoula, MT (main office) and Billings, MT (satellite office).

When fully staffed, the medical examiner's office has one chief medical examiner (located in Billings) and three deputy medical examiners (two in Missoula and one in Billings).

BENEFITS

Salary: \$291,325 annually

Comp time earned, which can be used as vacation time, accrued at a rate of one hour per night of call (i.e., around 180 additional hours each year), and one hour for each hour worked over 40 hours per week, which, in general, allows for flexibility of day-to-day scheduling

Relocation expense of \$5,000 to \$10,000

Supplemental salary for work performed at the Billings office if necessary, and for performance of contracted hospital autopsies (around 0-4 per year)

State of Montana benefits including paid vacation, sick leave, holidays, health, dental, and vision insurance, life insurance, disability insurance, and choice of two retirement plans (“defined benefit” (i.e., pension plan) or “defined contribution” (i.e., 401K type plan).

Other benefits: reimbursement of licensure and continuing educational requirements, including one paid conference per year, and qualification for student loan forgiveness.

BENEFITS OF LIVING IN MISSOULA

Missoula, a town of around 80,000 people, with 120,000 in the metro area, is home to the University of Montana, which is associated with Grizzly football and numerous concerts and other events.

Missoula has numerous restaurants, four golf courses, a fantastic farmer’s market during the summer days, and the Snowbowl ski area, which is just on the outskirts of town. It is located along the Clark Fork River in Western Montana at the convergence of five mountain ranges, sometimes called “the hub of five valleys.” Hiking to the “M” on Mt. Sentinel at the edge of the University of Montana campus provides a beautiful view of the area as well as good exercise.

Missoula is bike friendly and has a very active downtown area. Within an easy driving distance (about 1 hour) there are two other ski hills and numerous hiking opportunities, including all along the Bitterroot Valley just south of town. Within 2 hours driving distance are Glacier National Park and Flathead Lake, which is one of the largest naturally occurring bodies of freshwater in the western United States, and one of the cleanest lakes in the world.

BASIC JOB DESCRIPTION

The Deputy Medical Examiner will perform less than the NAME (National Association of Medical Examiners) allowed number of autopsies per year (for reference, in 2024, the Chief Medical Examiner performed 299 autopsies, and the three Deputy Medical Examiners averaged 180 autopsies each; however, caseloads can fluctuate).

With rare exceptions at the discretion of the pathologist, autopsies are not performed on weekends or holidays. In addition to autopsies, the Deputy Medical Examiner will provide consultation and education to the coroners, assist with continued accreditation efforts as necessary, and present autopsy findings in court, both criminal court and coroner inquests.

Assisting the medical examiners are four experienced autopsy assistants (two in each office, one full and one part-time) and an ABMDI certified coroner liaison, who handles much daily communication with the coroners and assists with their education.

The office recently implemented MDILog for a shared death investigation case management system with the coroners.

MINIMUM QUALIFICATIONS

A medical degree from an accredited school and a license to practice medicine in Montana

Board certification in Anatomic and Forensic Pathology, or acquisition of board certification within two years of hire, and with maintenance of certification

Additional certification or training in a relevant sub-specialty of pathology (e.g., neuropathology, pediatric pathology, or cardiac pathology), or a related forensic field (e.g., anthropology) is desirable but not necessary.

PHYSICAL, ENVIRONMENTAL, AND WORKPLACE CONDITIONS

As with all forensic pathology offices, the Deputy Medical Examiner will be exposed to infectious agents, physical dangers (e.g., needles and scalpels), emotional circumstances, handling of bodies weighing 300-400+ lbs., and the need to balance a changing work environment (e.g., variable number of autopsies per day), and intersecting responsibilities (e.g., autopsy workload requirements balanced with courtroom testimony requirements).

The medical examiner office is NAME accredited and has the support of an excellent in-house internationally accredited forensic science laboratory, which includes toxicology, DNA, firearms, latent prints, and chemistry sections. The toxicology lab currently has a turnaround time on medical examiner/coroner cases of around 30 days or less for 90% of their cases, and with use of the QTOF screen, analyzes for over 300 compounds in the standard screen, and can-do expanded testing for over 1000 compounds.

Travel for testimony or coroner education, sometimes up to 200+ miles one way, and sometimes during winter months, requires ability to operate a motor vehicle in all weather conditions. The State of Montana provides vehicles for such travel

Rotating call is shared with one other pathologist, with on-call responsibilities including evenings, weekends, and holidays, which is compensated as previously described. While

exceptions occur, most nights may involve 1-2 calls at most and call is only over the telephone, with very rare need for death scene support to the coroners at the discretion of the pathologist

Knowledge and recurring training for compliance with DOJ/FSD/MEO policies is required.

A criminal history fingerprint and name-based check, intensive background check, driving history review, and urine drug screen prior to starting the job are required as is on-going random urine drug screens during employment

Point of contact: Dr. Walter Kemp, Chief Medical Examiner, walter.kemp@mt.gov

Closing Date (based on your computer's time zone): ***ONGOING, waiting on your stellar resume and cover letter.***