

1980 WL 120739 (S.C.A.G.)

Office of the Attorney General

State of South Carolina

June 24, 1980

\*1 The Honorable L. M. Sauls, III  
Coroner Jasper County  
Post Office Box 83  
Ridgeland, South Carolina 29936

Dear Coroner Sauls:

I am in receipt of your request for an Opinion from this Office, dated June 11, 1980. Specifically, your request pertains to the question of the authority of the Coroner to be notified upon the discovery of a dead body. Your desire to know if there is specific authority requiring the Coroner to be so notified prior to the removal of such dead body.

[§ 17-7-510, Code of Laws of South Carolina \(1976\)](#) provides that:

'If any person shall bury or cause to be buried the dead body of a person supposed to have come to a violent death before notice to the coroner to examine the body and before inquiry is made into the manner and circumstances of the death, such person shall be liable to indictment therefor before the court of general sessions and upon conviction, shall be fined and imprisoned at the discretion of the presiding judge. And the coroner shall bind him in recognizance, with sufficient surety, to appear and stand his trial at the ensuing term of such court.'

It is thus evident that a coroner is authorized to make immediate inspection of dead bodies which are discovered, and are supposed to have come to a violent death. It is a criminal offense for the body to be moved and buried prior to notice of the bodies' discovery having been forwarded to the Coroner.

Sincerely,

Wayne G. Carter, Jr.  
Staff Attorney

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