

Mortuary Technician interview questions

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What to expect

Mortuary technician interviews are usually practical and values driven. Employers want to see that you can handle the technical work safely, follow legal and ethical requirements, and communicate respectfully with families, funeral directors and pathologists. Expect a mix of process, technical, scenario, behavioural, safety and client-facing questions, often with a tour of the facility.

- **Process and compliance:** Questions about receiving, identifying, storing and releasing deceased people, and the records you keep at each step.
- **Technical:** Questions on post-mortem assistance, embalming, cosmetic preparation, instrument sterilisation and cold storage.
- **Safety and infection control:** Questions about work health and safety, standard precautions, hazardous substances and managing risks in the mortuary.
- **Scenario and judgement:** Situations that test how you handle discrepancies, distressed families or competing priorities under pressure.
- **Behavioural:** Past examples of working calmly, communicating with families, or managing a difficult case.
- **Client and family facing:** Questions about cultural, religious and family requirements for viewing and preparation.

A typical interview is a panel with the mortuary manager and a senior technician, sometimes with a pathologist or HR representative. It often starts with a walkthrough of your experience, moves into process and technical questions, then scenario and behavioural questions. You may be asked about shift work and on-call availability. Many employers include a tour of the mortuary and a practical skills check, such as preparing a trolley or demonstrating infection control steps.

1. Walk me through how you receive, identify and record a deceased person into the mortuary, from arrival to storage.

Why they ask

This is the core process question. The interviewer wants to see that you follow identification and documentation steps without shortcuts.

How to structure your answer

Process walk-through: start with arrival and handover, then identity checks, then recording, then storage. Name each check and the record you complete.

Example answer

"When a deceased person arrives, I first check the handover paperwork and the identification band against the name, date of birth and hospital or coronial number. I confirm two identifiers every time. I record the arrival in the mortuary management system, note any personal effects and their storage, and assign a storage bay. If it is a coronial case, I check the coronial paperwork and any specific instructions before I move the person. I then complete the cold storage log with the time, bay number and my initials. If anything does not match, I stop and contact the nurse in charge or the coronial liaison officer before proceeding."

2. Tell me about a time you had to stay composed while working under pressure or with a distressed family.

Why they ask

Mortuary work brings you close to grief. The interviewer wants evidence that you can be calm and respectful without becoming detached.

How to structure your answer

STAR: Situation, Task, Action, Result. Keep the result about the family's experience and your own learning.

Example answer

"A family arrived to view their mother before the funeral, and they were very upset and had brought children with them. I was the technician on duty. I took a moment to check the viewing room was ready and that the presentation matched their requests, then I met the family at reception and spoke quietly, explaining what they would see and giving them time. I stayed nearby but not intrusive, and I answered their questions about the preparation. Afterwards, the funeral director told me the family felt their mother looked peaceful. I learned that slowing down and explaining each step helps families feel supported."

3. You notice a discrepancy between the identification band and the paperwork just before a post-mortem. What do you do?

Why they ask

This tests judgement and whether you will stop a process when something is wrong.

How to structure your answer

Judgement under pressure: stop, escalate, document, do not proceed until resolved.

Example answer

"I would stop immediately and not move the person to the post-mortem suite. I would keep the body in its current location and check the identification band, the paperwork and the mortuary tracking record again. If the discrepancy remains, I would contact my supervisor and the coronial liaison officer or pathologist, depending on the case, and report what I found. I would document the time, what I checked and who I notified. I would not proceed until the identity is confirmed and the correction is signed off. This protects the deceased person, their family and the integrity of the examination."

4. How do you ensure infection control and correct sterilisation of instruments between cases?

Why they ask

Technical and safety question. The interviewer wants to hear standard precautions and Australian standards.

How to structure your answer

Technical explanation: standard precautions, cleaning, disinfection, sterilisation, tracking. Use AS/NZS 4187 as the reference.

Example answer

"I follow standard precautions for every case: PPE including gown, gloves, eye protection and mask, and I treat every deceased person as potentially infectious. After a post-mortem, I clean instruments to remove visible soil, then reprocess them according to AS/NZS 4187. That means washing, inspecting, and sterilising in the autoclave, with cycle logs and batch tracking. I check sterilisation indicators and record the cycle. I also clean benches, trolleys and the floor with the approved disinfectant, and I dispose of sharps and waste in the correct streams. If a cycle fails, I quarantine the instruments and report it before anything is reused."

5. What are the main work health and safety risks in a mortuary and how do you manage them?

Why they ask

Safety question. Employers need to know you can identify hazards and apply controls.

How to structure your answer

Safety structure: identify hazards, then controls in order of elimination, substitution, engineering, administrative, PPE. Give examples.

Example answer

"The main risks are exposure to blood and body fluids, sharps injuries, formaldehyde and other chemicals, manual handling, and slips on wet floors. I manage them by using standard precautions and PPE, by using safe sharps practices and a sharps container at the point of use, and by checking chemical labels and safety data sheets before I decant or use them. I keep the floor dry and use signage for wet areas. For manual handling, I use trolleys and team lifts, and I plan the move before I start. I report any incident or near miss immediately and review the control with my supervisor."

6. How would you prepare a body for viewing when the family has specific cultural or religious requirements?

Why they ask

Client and family facing question. The interviewer wants to see respect, listening and coordination.

How to structure your answer

Client-facing structure: confirm requirements, plan, coordinate, check, document.

Example answer

"I would start by getting the family's requirements in writing through the funeral director or the family liaison contact. I would ask about who can touch the body, what clothing or coverings are needed, positioning, and whether any items should be placed with the person. I would prepare the body according to those instructions, using cosmetic work that is consistent with their wishes. I would check the viewing room arrangement, for example seating and privacy, and confirm the time so the family is not waiting. I would document the requirements and any changes, and I would tell the funeral director when the person is ready."