How Many Death Certificates Should We Order?

The short answer: do not begin with a generic number.

DIRECT ANSWER List every organization that may need proof of death. Ask each one whether it requires a certified copy, accepts a photocopy or secure upload, or only needs to inspect and return an original. Order from the confirmed needs, then add only the small reserve your family can justify after checking the cost and later-order process.

Use this simple order formula

Confirmed copies kept	Copies needed at the same time	Small family reserve
Recipients that confirm they retain a certified copy	Urgent matters that cannot wait for a returned copy	A modest cushion based on cost and reorder timing

Call before ordering

SAY THIS "I am organizing records after a death. Please tell me whether you require a certified copy, whether you keep or return it, the secure delivery method, and the reference number I should include."

Recipient requirements planner

Recipient	Certified / copy / inspect	Keeps or returns	Secure method
Court / attorney	_____	_____	_____
Bank / credit union	_____	_____	_____
Insurance / retirement	_____	_____	_____
Title / vehicle	_____	_____	_____
Other	_____	_____	_____

WATCH OUT Eligibility, fees, available forms, and correction procedures vary. Use the issuing office and each recipient's current instructions.

Have this information ready

- **Full legal name and date/place of death**
- **Recipient contact plus claim, case, or account reference**
- **Your identity and relationship or authority, if requested**
- **Reliable records supporting any fact that may need correction**

Avoid these costly shortcuts

- **Ordering by habit:** Do not copy another estate's five, ten, or twenty-copy order.
- **Using an insecure channel:** Verify the recipient and delivery method before sending an unredacted certificate.
- **Sending the only copy:** Confirm whether it will be kept or returned before it leaves your control.
- **Ignoring a possible error:** Ask how correction works before distributing additional copies.

RESERVE CHECK Before adding extra copies, compare three things: how quickly you could reorder, what each extra copy costs, and whether two recipients may need to hold certified copies at the same time.

KEEP ONE CONTROL RECORD Keep the completed planner, calculator, order receipt, and call notes together. Record when each certificate is sent, whether it is retained or returned, and where the remaining copies are stored. That simple record can prevent duplicate orders and help the family explain what happened later.