

Executor Roadmap & First 48 Hours Checklist

The first 48 hours after a death are chaotic.

Your executor will be dealing with their own grief while also handling urgent practical matters. They need to secure property, notify key people, and start organizing paperwork.

This checklist helps them prioritize what needs to happen immediately and what can wait.

The first 48 hours: Secure, Notify, Record

Your Executor Roadmap & First 48 Hours Checklist

A step-by-step path through the first hours and days, so nothing urgent is missed.

WITHIN THE FIRST FEW HOURS

Secure the person's home (lock up, set alarm, collect mail, pets, plants)

Locate the Will (check Part 2; contact the lawyer who drafted it)

Locate this Estate Organizer and read the Message to Your Executor

Contact immediate family (see Key Contacts)

WITHIN THE FIRST 24 HOURS

Obtain the Death certificate

Register the death (your funeral director usually handles this; how it works and the timing vary by state, so check with them, and it's worth ordering a few certified copies of the death certificate, as several organizations will ask for one)

Contact the funeral director (check the Funeral chapter for wishes)

Notify the deceased's employer (final pay, leave, retirement savings)

Secure valuable items (jewelry, cash, documents) and record them

Your Executor Roadmap & First 48 Hours Checklist (cont.)

WITHIN THE FIRST 48 HOURS

- Notify close friends (see Key Contacts)
- Contact the lawyer
- Contact insurance companies (if death benefits apply)
- Arrange care for dependents
- Arrange care for pets
- Cancel immediate appointments
- Start a death administration notebook

NOTES: WHAT'S BEEN DONE, AND WHAT STILL NEEDS DOING