HISTORY

The San Diego County Medical Examiner's Office was established as the County Coroner with the creation of the County in 1850. Initially led by San Diego's first coroner, John Brown, the office had 27 different coroners throughout its history until the County converted to a Medical Examiner system in 1990. The major difference between the two systems is that a Medical Examiner must be a physician, specifically a forensic pathologist, while a coroner can be a lay person and is traditionally elected. Despite being a stand-alone department within the County, we are an active partner with all of the law enforcement agencies serving the San Diego community, including the District Attorney, the San Diego Sheriff's Office, the San Diego Police Department, and the other law enforcement agencies in the County.

For the first hundred years of our existence, we performed the administrative aspects of the department in what was then the County courthouse and various offices downtown (including the Spreckels Building and the Land Title Building, which is now where the NBC Building stands) and performed examinations at various local mortuaries. All functions were consolidated under one roof on April 1, 1957 at the now nonexistent 3322 Congress Street in Old Town, close to the current Old Town Transit station. Our first toxicology laboratory was operational the following year.

1963

2009

In October of 1963 we moved into Building 14 at the current County Operations Center (COC) in Kearny Mesa. We remained there for the next 46 years, undergoing several expansions.

In December 2009, we moved into our brand new, state-of-the-art facility at the COC, more than tripling our space and our capacity for future growth. Building 14 was demolished in early 2010 for a multi-story parking structure as part of a larger project of redesigning the entire COC.