

# Capital cases

**A Capital Case in Pennsylvania refers to a case where a defendant is convicted of first-degree murder and sentenced to death.**

In order to receive a death sentence the crime must be found to include one of the **aggravating circumstances** listed in Pennsylvania Law.

**Circumstances** occurring in conjunction with a premeditated murder that supported the sentence of death including, among others:

- that the offense was committed by means of torture;
- the death of the victim occurred while the defendant was engaged in hijacking of an aircraft;
- the victim was under 12-years of age;
- and the defendant committed a killing while in the perpetration of a felony.

**The Supreme Court must review all capital punishment cases.** Even when a defendant fails to appeal his death sentence, the Supreme Court conducts an automatic review of the sufficiency of the evidence to support first-degree murder, and the presence of at least one of the aggravating factors and to ensure the death sentence was the not the product of passion, prejudice or any other arbitrary factors.

Capital Punishment or the death penalty is a legal punishment in the state of Pennsylvania, however, there have only been three executions in Pennsylvania since 1976. Prior to 1976, Pennsylvania carried out 1,040 executions. On February 13, 2015, Governor Tom Wolf announced a moratorium on the death penalty. This moratorium is currently in existence and precludes the execution of any person convicted and sentenced in a capital case.

Pennsylvania's execution chamber is located in State Correctional Institute at Rockview. Male death row inmates are also housed in State Correctional Institute at Green and State Correctional Institute at Phoenix, female death row inmates are housed at State Correctional Institute at Muncy. There are currently more than 150 death row inmates in Pennsylvania.

<https://deathpenaltyinfo.org/state-and-federal-info/state-by-state/pennsylvania>  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Supreme\\_Court\\_of\\_Pennsylvania](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Supreme_Court_of_Pennsylvania)  
Staff Manual – Section 8  
42 Pa C.S. § 9711  
<https://capitalpunishmentincontext.org/resources/statelaws/pa>

