Spokane County
Medical Examiner
Annual Report 2023

102 South Spokane Street
Spokane, WA
99202
509.477.2296
About Our Office

Introduction
The Spokane County Medical Examiner’s Office (SCMEO) is tasked with investigating certain deaths occurring in Spokane County, Washington. The criteria defining which deaths must be investigated by the SCMEO are determined by the state; they include deaths occurring by unnatural or unlawful means, deaths occurring in suspicious circumstances, violent or traumatic deaths, and sudden or unexpected deaths in previously healthy persons. Due to a nationwide shortage of forensic pathologists, SCMEO also provides autopsy services to several counties in Eastern Washington and Northern Idaho, as staffing and capacity allow.

Medicolegal death investigation in Spokane County utilizes the medical diagnostic process, in which information about the circumstances of death and the decedent’s medical, surgical, psychosocial, and occupational history are combined with observations from the death scene, postmortem physical examination of the body, and laboratory testing to form conclusions about what injuries and/or diseases caused the death. While we work closely and collaboratively with law enforcement and crime scene investigators, we conduct our investigation and form our conclusions independently of other agencies. The work done by our staff is physically, mentally, and emotionally challenging, and we are grateful to these caring, committed people who serve our community day in and day out.

In addition to providing answers to the families and loved ones of decedents, medicolegal death investigations have broad importance for community health and safety. Death investigations provide evidence to convict the guilty and protect the innocent, generate data to inform public health research and intervention strategies, and document occupational, transportation, and product safety risks. The SCMEO is also dedicated to establishing and/or confirming identification of deceased persons, ensuring families are aware of a loved one’s demise, and managing unclaimed remains.
Accreditation and Certifications

Our office has been continually accredited by the National Association of Medical Examiners (NAME) since 2004, NAME is the national professional organization of forensic pathologists, physician medical examiners, medical death investigators, death investigation system administrators, and consultants who perform the official duties of medicolegal investigation of deaths of public interest in the United States. Accreditation is a rigorous process, requiring a lengthy and in-depth initial inspection by an independent Medical Examiner trained and appointed by NAME, as well as annual self-inspections and follow-up on-site inspections every 4 years. Less than 4% of all Medical Examiner and Coroner Offices in the country have achieved this accreditation.

All our forensic pathologists have completed specialty and subspecialty medical training and are board certified diplomates of the American Board of Pathology (ABPath), a member board of the American Board of Medical Specialties, which sets professional standards for the medical practice of pathology and its various subspecialties.

All our investigators are board certified diplomates of the American Board of Medicolegal Death Investigators (ABMDI), a national, not-for-profit, independent professional certification board that has been established to promote the highest standards of practice for medicolegal death investigators.
• For more information on NAME and the accreditation process, click the following links:

  https://thename.org
  https://www.thename.org/inspection-accreditation

• For more information on ABPath, click the following link:

  https://www.abms.org/board/american-board-of-pathology/

• For more information on ABMDI or to see the listing of those granted ABMDI certification, click the following link:

  https://abmdi.org/

In 2020, SCMEO moved into a new state-of-the-art facility located at 102 South Spokane Street, Spokane, WA 99202. The facility includes an on-site CT scanner, full body and dental imaging systems, seven autopsy stations, a special procedures room, and cooler space for up to 150 decedents. With grant awards from Spokane County, Washington State, and the Federal Government, we have continued to improve the facility and upgrade our equipment to better serve the community and region.
In 2023, SCMEO was staffed by 17 employees and was composed of the following departments: Pathology, Investigations, Morgue, and Administration.

- There are 4 Forensic Pathologist positions at SCMEO, including the Chief Medical Examiner and three Deputy Medical Examiners. One of the Deputy Medical Examiner positions is currently unfilled. The Medical Examiners make decisions about case jurisdiction, decide the scope and course of a death investigation, attend death scenes when appropriate, conduct postmortem examinations, order laboratory studies, review records and test results, formulate medical diagnoses, certify deaths, generate autopsy reports, and provide court testimony. The Chief Medical Examiner also directs the overall operation of the SCMEO, ensures compliance with statutory and regulatory requirements, develops and refines the office strategic plan, and coordinates all office activities including death investigations, education, training, public health, and outreach.

- There are seven positions in the Investigations department. Investigators gather information about the circumstances of death, obtain medical records and other documents to aid in the medical aspect of death investigation, and evaluate death scenes, serving as the "eyes and ears" of the Medical Examiners. They are usually the first point of contact for the public and others with questions or requests for the Medical Examiner's Office. An investigator is on staff and available 24 hours per day, 365 days per year.

- In the Morgue department, there are four positions, including the Morgue Supervisor and three Autopsy Assistants. The Morgue staff provides technical support for the examination and identification of bodies; their work includes photography, fingerprinting, forensic imaging, evidence handling, and assistance with autopsy procedures.

- The Operations Manager oversees the Investigations, Morgue, and Administration departments. The Administration department includes two Administrative Support Specialists III. The administrative staff handles business operations and records management, enters data for electronic Death Certificates, releases the decedent's personal effects to family members or their representatives, and responds to records requests from families, attorneys, law enforcement, insurance companies, and others.
“Any government with an interest in the lives of its citizens must have a compelling interest in their deaths.”

Drs. Charles Hirsch and Ross Zumwalt
About Our Work

Overview

Not all deaths occurring in Spokane County need to be reported to or investigated by the Medical Examiner; the majority of deaths are natural and are certified by the deceased person’s health care provider. The Spokane County Medical Examiner’s Office is responsible for the investigation of all sudden, unexpected, violent, suspicious, or unnatural deaths occurring in Spokane County, and the certification of cause and manner of death for cases determined to fall under the jurisdiction of the Medical Examiner. Investigation of each reported death begins with careful information gathering about the circumstances of the death and the decedent’s history, and is supplemented, as appropriate, by death scene investigation, autopsy examination, toxicology testing, and other laboratory studies. Once the investigation is complete, the findings are used to formulate a medical opinion about what conditions caused and contributed to the death. If the death is determined to be entirely natural and the decedent is under the care of a health care provider, jurisdiction will be released, and the death will be certified by the health care provider or Regional Health District. If the initial investigation suggests that the death may be due to injury, drugs, or foul play, the case falls under Medical Examiner jurisdiction, and the Medical Examiner will use the investigation and examination findings to certify the cause and manner of death on the Death Certificate.

Deaths That Must Be Reported to the Medical Examiner

- Persons who die suddenly when in apparent good health and without medical attendance within 36 hours preceding death.
- Circumstances that indicate death was caused in part or entirely by unnatural or unlawful means.
- Suspicious circumstances.
- Unknown or obscure causes.
- Deaths caused by any injury whatsoever, whether the primary cause or contributing cause.
- Rapidly fatal contagious disease, with public health risk.
- Deaths occurring in jail or prison
- Unclaimed bodies.
- Premature and stillborn infants where suspicious circumstances exist.
- All deaths in children.
Cause and Manner of Death

The cause of death describes the physical finding in the body that led to death. This may be a natural disease, such as a heart attack or stroke; an injury of some kind, such as a gunshot wound or stab wound; or the toxic effects of a substance, such as a fentanyl overdose. The manner of death is a way to categorize deaths for public health reasons and is determined using Medical Examiner criteria outlined by the National Association of Medical Examiners. The categories are natural, accident, suicide, homicide, and undetermined. Deaths due entirely to natural disease, with no contribution from external factors such as injury or drugs, are classified as natural. If one or more external factors did contribute, the death is considered non-natural and may be categorized as accident, suicide, homicide, or undetermined. Non-natural deaths resulting from the inadvertent outcome of some action are classified as accident. Non-natural deaths resulting from self-inflicted injury are classified as suicide. Non-natural deaths resulting from injuries inflicted by another person are classified as homicide. If there is not enough information about the circumstances of death, or compelling arguments can be made for two or more manners, the death may be classified as undetermined. The manner of death is determined after taking into account all information available at the time of death certification; if relevant information subsequently becomes available, the manner of death may be amended. Manner of death classification was added to the death certificate to assist public health statisticians in compiling and analyzing data, and is a medical opinion independent from any legal determination.

Process

An initial investigation is done on every death reported to the SCMEO, to determine whether the death falls under SCMEO jurisdiction. An investigator will gather pertinent history and medical records for Medical Examiner review. In certain cases, a SCMEO investigator will attend the death scene in person to gather additional information and perform a preliminary examination of the body. Cases in which a scene response will occur include suspected homicides and suicides, suspicious deaths, presumed accidental deaths, and cases in which the person is suspected to have died of natural disease, but was not under the care of a clinician and/or drug use or previous injury may have played a role in the death. In 2023, investigators attended 691 death scenes within the boundaries of Spokane County.

Not all cases falling under Medical Examiner jurisdiction are autopsied. Some deaths can be certified via a review of medical records, and the bodies of those decedents can be released to the funeral home without being brought to the SCMEO. Deaths which occur within the boundaries of Spokane County, do fall under SCMEO’s jurisdiction, and require a postmortem examination are transported to SCMEO by a contract body transport company.

If a body is transported to SCMEO, the Medical Examiner may choose to perform a complete autopsy, partial autopsy, or an external examination. In all autopsies and external examinations that do not consist of skeletal remains, specimens are collected for potential toxicology and laboratory analysis.
About our Cases

Deaths Reported

In 2023, there were 5970 deaths in Spokane County, a 1.1% decrease from the year prior. Based on the latest United States Census Bureau data, the estimated population of Spokane County is 559,775. The 5970 deaths thus represent approximately 1.06% of the population. Of these deaths, 2132 or 35.71% of the deaths were reported to the Medical Examiner for investigation. Based upon circumstances of death, the decedent’s medical history, and analysis of the scene, the Medical Examiner assumed jurisdiction in 1060 (49.71%) of these reported deaths, or in 17.75% of all deaths in the county. This is a 14.22% increase of jurisdiction accepted cases over the previous year.

Spokane County Deaths Reported in 2021-2023
In addition to the 2132 deaths investigated for Spokane County, the office handled 195 cases for outside counties. SCMEO investigators do not physically perform scene investigations on cases that are reported from outside the physical boundaries of Spokane County. For cases from outside Spokane County, the death investigation is conducted by Coroner’s Office staff and an autopsy must be ordered by the Coroner of that jurisdiction.

**Referral County Cases - 2023**

**Exam Types**

The autopsy numbers represent complete, partial, and external examinations. A “complete” autopsy includes a detailed examination of the external surfaces of the body as well as an internal examination, which involves surgical incisions of the head and abdomen, inspection of the body cavities, and removal and dissection of the internal organs. In select cases, only a portion of the internal examination is performed (called a “partial” examination). In certain other cases, only the detailed examination of the external surfaces of the body is performed, without any surgical incisions (called an “external” examination).
Notable Trends

• **Fatal drug overdoses**

From 2021 to 2023, Spokane County has seen a 42.48% increase in accidental overdose deaths in persons greater than 50 years of age. This reflects a national trend of increasing substance abuse among those in middle and later adulthood; some factors thought to play a role in this trend include generations (“Gen X” and “Boomers”) who used illicit drugs at higher rates than previous generations and continue to use these drugs as they age, and chronic pain patients who are unable to obtain sufficient pain medication from clinics or hospitals and turn to the illicit drug market to supplement their prescriptions.
Generally, in 2023 there were over 4 times as many drug-related deaths as motor vehicle fatalities. From 2022 to 2023, there was a 31.97% increase in fentanyl-related overdose deaths in Spokane County, continuing a trend which has resulted in an astonishing 593% increase from 2020 to 2023. Fentanyl was detected in 64.45% of all accidental overdoses in 2023.

See page 16 for more information.

• Pedestrian and bicyclist fatalities

From 2022 to 2023, there was a 212.5% increase in pedestrian fatalities and a 300% increase in bicyclist fatalities. Of the 4 bicyclist fatalities, 1 involved a crash while the other 3 were struck by a motor vehicle. Of the 25 pedestrian fatalities 18, or 72%, had a positive toxicology test. 3 of the 4, or 75%, of bicyclist fatalities involved a positive toxicology test.
Manner of Death Overview

- Accident: 63.87%
- Natural: 20.85%
- Suicide: 10.18%
- Homicide: 3.40%
- Undetermined: 1.70%

Manner of Death Trend-2021-2023

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Manner of Death</th>
<th>2021</th>
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<th>2023</th>
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<tr>
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<td>587</td>
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<tr>
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<td>32</td>
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<tr>
<td>Natural</td>
<td>249</td>
<td>186</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Suicide</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>102</td>
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<tr>
<td>Undetermined</td>
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<td>Total</td>
<td>952</td>
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Homicides

By Age

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<td>20-29</td>
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<td>70-79</td>
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<td>80-89</td>
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By Injury Type

<table>
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<th>Injury Type</th>
<th>Count</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>Firearms</td>
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<td>Blunt Trauma</td>
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<tr>
<td>Stab/Incised Wound</td>
<td>6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Restraint</td>
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</table>
Suicides

By Age

By Injury Type
Accidental Deaths

By Age

By Injury Type
Falls and drug overdoses accounted for the majority of accidental deaths. Of the fall-related deaths, 216 or 87.4% were in individuals aged 70 and older.

### Accidental Deaths >70 Years of Age –Mechanism of Injury

- **Fall**: 216
- **Motor Vehicle**: 13
- **Drugs**: 13
- **Other**: 6
- **Hypothermia**: 4
- **Fire**: 3
- **Drowning**: 3
- **Choking**: 2
- **Hyperthermia**: 2

### Drug Toxicity Deaths

#### Multiple Drug Versus Single Drug Toxicity

- **Single Drug Toxicity, 113, 38%**
- **Multiple Drug Toxicity, 188, 62%**
Manner of Death

- Accident, 301, 90%
- Suicide, 23, 7%
- Natural, 9, 3%

Illicit Drug Detected – 2021-2023

- Heroin
- Cocaine
- Methamphetamine
- Fentanyl

2021: 33, 9, 12, 3
2022: 92, 108, 16, 3
2023: 120, 147, 38, 194
While much attention has been paid to fentanyl deaths, methamphetamine related deaths also continue to rise. Methamphetamine was detected in 53.15% of all accidental overdoses while fentanyl was detected in 64.45% in 2023. Cocaine-related deaths have also increased from 2021 to 2023.

**Fatalities Involving Fentanyl – 2021-2023**

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<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Fatalities</th>
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<tr>
<td>2022</td>
<td>147</td>
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<tr>
<td>2023</td>
<td>194</td>
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**Fatalities Involving Methamphetamine – 2021-2023**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Fatalities</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2021</td>
<td>92</td>
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<tr>
<td>2022</td>
<td>120</td>
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<tr>
<td>2023</td>
<td>160</td>
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</table>
Accidental Drug Deaths by Decedent Gender – 2023

- Male, 217
- Female, 84

Accidental Drug Deaths by Decedent Age – 2023

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Range</th>
<th>Count</th>
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<tr>
<td>10-19</td>
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<tr>
<td>20-29</td>
<td>29</td>
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<tr>
<td>30-39</td>
<td>67</td>
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<tr>
<td>40-49</td>
<td>45</td>
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<td>50-59</td>
<td>80</td>
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<tr>
<td>60-69</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70-79</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Motor Vehicle Fatalities

- Pedestrian, 25, 32%
- Automobile Driver, 17, 22%
- Motorcycle Driver, 17, 22%
- Automobile Passenger, 11, 14%
- Bicyclist, 4, 5%
- ATV, 4, 5%

Motor Vehicle Fatalities by Age

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Range</th>
<th>Fatalities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10-19</td>
<td>6</td>
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<tr>
<td>20-29</td>
<td>10</td>
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<td>60-69</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70-79</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
```
Motor Vehicle Fatalities by Seatbelt Use

Unrestrained, 13, 46%
Restrained, 15, 54%

Motor Vehicle Fatalities by Decedent’s Location in Vehicle

Passenger, 11, 39%
Driver, 17, 61%
Motorcycle Fatalities by Age – 2023

Pedestrian Fatalities by Age – 2023
Drugs and/or alcohol were detected in 50 out of 78 (64.1%) traffic fatalities that occurred within the boundaries of Spokane County in 2023. This includes drivers, passengers, bicyclists, and pedestrians.

**Drugs Detected in Traffic Fatalities – 2023**

- THC, 9, 18%
- Prescription, 5, 10%
- Alcohol, 8, 16%
- Combined Drugs & Alcohol, 6, 12%
- Illicit Drugs, 22, 44%

**Traffic Fatalities with Positive Toxicology**

- Pedestrian, 18, 36%
- Passenger, 7, 14%
- Bicyclist, 3, 6%
- Driver, 22, 44%
Contrary to expectation, only 1 person out of the 11 environmental exposure deaths was a member of the unhoused community, living outdoors in the winter. 10 of the 11, or 90.90% of all environmental exposure deaths, occurred in the housed population, with the person found either inside their home, in their driveway, or in their yard.


Beat the Heat- [www.gonzaga.edu/BeatTheHeat](http://www.gonzaga.edu/BeatTheHeat)


Drowning Deaths
Natural Disease Deaths

In 2023, 40.04% of Spokane County Medical Examiner cases were due to natural disease, and the most common cause of natural death was heart disease.

Natural Disease Deaths by Age

Natural Disease Deaths by Disease Process
Cardiovascular Deaths by Age, 2020-2023

Resources for Cardiovascular Health

- Cardiovascular Resources: Cardiovascular Health Resources Resources & FAQs (vmfh.org)
- American Heart Association - https://www.heart.org/
- Cardiovascular Disease - Cardiovascular health: Heart-healthy, science-backed resources (medicalnewstoday.com)

Ways to Improve Cardiovascular Health

- Eating healthy
- Exercising often: Aim for at least 30 to 60 minutes of activity daily
- Not smoking
- Watching your cholesterol
- Getting good quality sleep
- Managing stress
- Maintaining a healthy weight
- Getting regular health screening
**Child Fatalities**

In 2023, SCMEO investigated 14 child fatalities (decedents less than three years of age) in Spokane County. Of those, 10 were under the age of 1. The Spokane County Medical Examiner’s Office will perform examinations on all infant deaths <3 years of age.

### Ages at Death

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&lt;1</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Manner of Death

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Manner</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Accident</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homicide</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undetermined</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natural</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A factor in most deaths in this group was an unsafe sleeping environment, including co-sleeping in adult beds and/or the use of adult-sized bedding materials in the child’s sleep area.

**IS YOUR BABY SLEEPING SAFELY?**

**4 Tips to help baby sleep safely:**

- Place baby on his or her back for all sleep times—naps and at night.
- Use a firm sleep surface, such as a mattress in a safety-approved crib.
- Keep soft bedding such as blankets, pillows, bumper pads, and soft toys out of the baby’s sleep area.
- Have baby share your room, NOT your bed.

**Resource:**

Safe Sleep for Babies: [https://www.cdc.gov/vitalsigns/safesleep/index.html](https://www.cdc.gov/vitalsigns/safesleep/index.html)
<1 Year of Age- Manner

Homicide
Accident
Undetermined

<1 Year of Age- Cause

Asphyxia, 3, 30%
Blunt Force, 4, 40%
SUDI, 3, 30%
Unhoused Persons

Deaths in Unhoused Persons by Jurisdiction Accepted vs. Jurisdiction Released - 2023

Jurisdiction in these cases was released only when the decedent died indoors and under the care of a physician. Of the 45 cases in which jurisdiction was released, 62% were reported from hospitals while the other 38% were in a home or shelter and were under the active care of a clinician. An Investigator responded to the scene to evaluate all home or shelter deaths. Of the cases investigated by SCMEO, most were accidental deaths.

Jurisdiction Accepted Deaths in Unhoused Persons by Manner – 2023
Accidental Deaths in Unhoused Persons by Method – 2023

Illicit Drugs vs. Prescription Drug Deaths in Unhoused Persons – 2023
**In-Custody Deaths**

An “in-custody” death is the death of a person occurring at any stage of interaction with law enforcement, including the initial confrontation with authorities, the process of arrest, during transport to a facility, or during incarceration. Deaths may also occur as a result of injuries sustained during an interaction with law enforcement. Incarcerated persons may die in a jail, prison, or other institution or may be hospitalized for a health condition while remaining in custody. All deaths in custody must be reported to the medical examiner.

**In-Custody Deaths Manner**

- Suicide, 4, 20%
- Accident, 3, 15%
- Homicide, 3, 15%
- Undetermined, 1, 5%
- Natural, 9, 45%
Unidentified Bodies

Determining the identity of the decedent is one of the first steps in a medicolegal death investigation. SCMEO uses a variety of techniques to scientifically identify decedents who are unknown, or for whom identification is tentative. When there is a possible or presumed identity, or the unknown decedent was fingerprinted or had their DNA entered into a government database during life, traditional identification methods can be used. In 2023, traditional scientific identification methods were employed for 66 decedents examined at SCMEO.

Methods of Traditional Scientific Identification of Unidentified Decedents - 2023

In some cases, more advanced identification techniques must be used. In 2022, SCMEO began a collaborative effort with law enforcement agencies and a private DNA laboratory to use Forensic Genetic Genealogy for identification of several long-unidentified decedents, with some cases dating back to the 1950s. For those cases, traditional means of identification had failed, and death investigation had been stalled while waiting for scientific advances to make identification possible. We continued to work on this project in 2023, closing out the year with 23 cases submitted for Forensic Genetic Genealogy testing and 9 cases brought to completion.
Other Community Involvement

Education
In 2023, SCMEO continued to provide educational programs to area hospitals, hospice agencies, and nursing homes. We also invited local coroners and (on separate occasions) local high school groups to our office for educational events, participated in a variety of educational activities at area high schools, and continued to partner with Washington State University College of Medicine on middle school and high school outreach.

In 2021, SCMEO established a college internship program and set up affiliation agreements with several local colleges and universities, including Gonzaga University, Eastern Washington University, and Whitworth University. The goal of the internship is to provide opportunities for students to learn about the work performed by the Medical Examiner’s Office and, under the direction of SCMEO staff, develop skills required to perform the duties of a Medical Investigator and/or Autopsy Assistant. Demand for internship spots remained high locally and nationally in 2023, and we welcomed interns from local schools and the University of Vermont, as well as a Department of Defense SkillBridge intern transitioning from military to civilian life.

The SCMEO continues to host medical students from the University of Washington and Washington State University Schools of Medicine for 1- and 2-day clinical experiences as well as longer clinical rotations.

Community Service and Public Health Surveillance
SCMEO pathologists continue to take part in hospital Morbidity and Mortality conferences and have been working with the Spokane Regional Health District to stand up Child Fatality and Drug Overdose Fatality Review Teams. The SCMEO also participates in multiple local and statewide public health surveillance programs, providing data on fatal drug overdoses, child deaths, motor vehicle deaths, and consumer product safety deaths to a variety of agencies.

Our office administers the indigent burial program for Spokane County, overseeing efforts to contact family members of the deceased and ensuring that public funds are used responsibly to make final arrangements for unclaimed persons. As part of this process, we also partner with the Washington State Veterans Cemetery, working to identify qualifying unclaimed veterans who can be interred with military honors. In 2023, we arranged disposition for 46 unclaimed decedents and facilitated military burial for 8.

SCMEO has worked to provide access to a room in our facility where tissue donation can take place, and in 2022 we finalized agreements with area donation agencies for use of this room. This has allowed us to honor decedent and family wishes for tissue donation in cases which would otherwise have been unable to proceed.

We continue to provide autopsy services and consultation to multiple counties in the region and are actively engaged in efforts to bolster the Washington State Medical Examiner and Coroner system during a severe nationwide forensic pathologist shortage.

In addition to the above, SCMEO actively participates in mass disaster planning and assists community partners in preparing for a mass fatality event.
Grants

SCMEO has been awarded 6 grants over the past two years, totaling over $2,150,000.00. This funding has enabled us to better prepare our office for a Mass Fatality Event, to upgrade our building and equipment, and to incorporate new technology to improve our operations, without requesting additional monies from the Spokane County General Fund.

Grants Overview

- State of Washington Department of Health: awarded for the purchase of racks and trays for Mass Fatality preparedness.
- U.S. Department of Commerce: awarded for equipment upgrades, training materials, and purchase of real-time toxicology testing machines.
- Spokane County American Rescue Plan: awarded for forensic genetic genealogical for unidentified decedents and test kits for toxicology testing machines.
- U.S. Health Resources and Services Administration: awarded for purchase of a CT scanner.
- National Network of Public Health Institutes: awarded for equipment to capture health data for public health surveillance and continual data sharing.
- State of Washington Department of Public Health: awarded for expanded drug testing on presumed illicit drug overdose cases for the purpose of surveillance.
Spokane County Demographics

Spokane County is 1,781 square miles in size. In 2023, the population of Spokane County was approximately 599,775 with a growth of 1.78% from the year prior.

Spokane County Facts According to US Census:

Gender:
Male- 50%
Female- 50%

Race:
Asian- 2.5%
African American- 2.2%
Caucasian- 81.2%
Hispanic- 6.9%
Native American- 1.9%
Pacific Islander- .7%
Two or More Races- 4.6%

Decedent Race and Manner
- 2023
Decedent Gender and Manner – 2023

Decedent Age and Manner - 2023