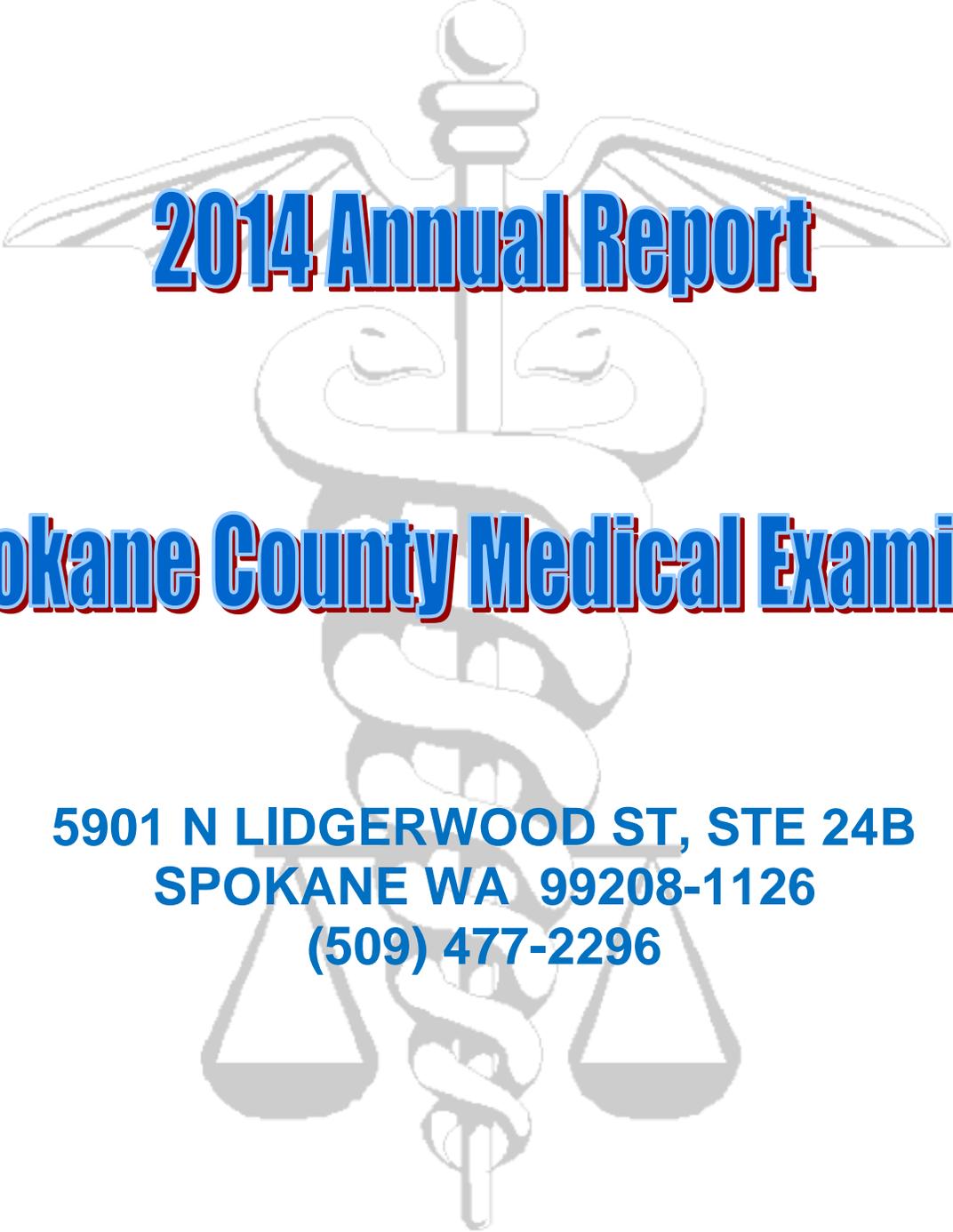


**COUNTY OF SPOKANE
STATE OF WASHINGTON**



2014 Annual Report

Spokane County Medical Examiner

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2014 ANNUAL REPORT

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Section 1: Overview

Mission Statement

“A regional center dedicated to excellence in public service by providing professional, scientific, and compassionate forensic death investigation.”

Introduction

The Spokane County Medical Examiner’s Office has been in existence since January 1, 1999, when the Coroner’s Office was replaced. In April of 2004, the office received full accreditation from the National Association of Medical Examiners (NAME). The office was re-inspected and re-accredited in May, 2009. Another inspection was completed in April 2014 and re-accreditation was obtained a third time. Roughly 85 Medical Examiner/Coroner Offices in the United States are accredited. The office employs two forensic pathologists, an office manager, four full time investigators, one full time administrative staff person and one half time administrative staff person, one chief autopsy assistant, one half time autopsy assistant, as well as 6 extra help employees who work as investigators on a call-out basis. For more information about the Medical Examiner’s Office, visit our web site at www.spokanecounty.org/medexaminer.

The office has been the recipient of five federal Paul Coverdell Forensic Science Improvement grants, totaling approximately \$ 300,000.00. The latest grant was awarded in March 2015. The last two Coverdell grants will provide camera equipment and update dental x-ray capabilities.

Foreword

Information presented in this annual report has been compiled from deaths that were reported to the Spokane County Medical Examiner’s Office in 2014. This summarized report presents data in a variety of formats with the objective of providing useful information to diverse groups in the community.

Referral Caseload: In addition to assuming statutory responsibility for unexpected death in Spokane County, the Spokane County Medical Examiner’s Office performs autopsies for 12 “outside” counties in Eastern Washington and the Idaho panhandle. In 2014 a total of 139 autopsies were performed for the following referral counties, Asotin, Benewah, Bonner, Boundary, Garfield, Kootenai, Lincoln, Lewis, Nez Perce, Pend Oreille, Shoshone and Stevens. The arrangement between these surrounding counties and the Spokane County Medical Examiner is mutually beneficial. The surrounding counties utilize forensic expertise and an accredited forensic pathology facility, without the necessity of having larger staffs, employing Forensic Pathologists, and maintaining an autopsy facility. Spokane County receives payment from outside counties for these services, revenues for autopsies totaled \$216,000 in 2014.

OUTSIDE COUNTY AUTOPSIES

2014	139
2013	125
2012	136
2011	186
2010	132
2009	157
2008	162
2007	138

SPOKANE COUNTY AUTOPSIES

2014	354
2013	408
2012	373
2011	359
2010	410
2009	394
2008	462
2007	430

Outside County Autopsies per County

	2014	2013	2012	2011	2010	2009	2008	2007
Asotin	2	1	4	3	6	3	5	0
Benewah	2	1	1	2	2	2	4	2
Bonner	12	9	14	15	8	19	20	11
Boundary	6	3	6	4	2	4	3	8
FBI	0	0	0	1	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Garfield	1	0	2	1	1	0	N/A	N/A
Kootenai	57	49	47	84	69	54	62	48
Lewis	0	0	1	1	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Lincoln	7	6	5	3	1	8	7	5
Nez Perce	9	10	10	16	10	14	5	4
Pend Oreille	8	8	7	12	5	6	6	7
Shoshone	7	8	10	9	6	9	6	14
Stevens	28	30	29	35	22	34	36	31

Criteria for Reportable Deaths

1. Persons who die suddenly when in apparent good health and without medical attendance within 36 hours preceding death.
2. Circumstances that indicate death was caused in part or entirely by unnatural or unlawful means.
3. Suspicious circumstances.
4. Unknown or obscure causes.
5. Deaths caused by any injury whatsoever, whether the primary cause or contributing cause.
6. Rapidly fatal contagious disease, with public health risk.
7. Unclaimed bodies.
8. Premature and stillborn infants where suspicious circumstances exist.
9. All deaths in children.

Function of the Medical Examiner's Office

The Medical Examiner's Office serves the living, by investigating deaths that are unnatural and / or unexpected, such deaths have implications to the greater community. This task begins with careful investigation at the scene of death, supplemented when appropriate, by autopsy examination, toxicology and other testing. The Medical Examiner's Office helps the community by determining the cause and manner of death, recognizing and collecting evidence needed for adjudication, defining public health and product safety risks and providing compassionate services to families including direction of efforts to notify next of kin.

Standard Annual Reports Data as Identified by the National Association of Medical Examiners (N.A.M.E.)

The Spokane County Medical Examiner's Office (SCMEO) achieved the distinction of Accreditation by the National Association of Medical Examiners in April, 2004. In March 2009 the Spokane County Medical Examiner's Office was inspected again and re-accredited by the National Association of Medical Examiners. Re-accreditation was obtained for another 5 year period in April 2014. The National Association of Medical Examiners (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. Most members work as Medical Examiners or Coroners. Accreditation is a rigorous process, and requires a lengthy inspection by an independent Medical Examiner appointed by the organization. The accreditation requirements are 30 pages long, and include more than 300 items covering diverse points of quality, such as how specimens are labeled, and the qualifications of staff members. The Spokane County Medical Examiner's Office is accredited for a 5 year period, until May 2019. Please refer to the following chart for some of the data required by the National Association of Medical Examiners.

2014 N.A.M.E. Data

Deaths in Spokane County	4585
Deaths Reported to the Medical Examiner's Office	3904
Deaths Investigated by the Medical Examiner's Office	576
Scenes Investigated by the Medical Examiner Office	308
Bodies transported by order of the office via Contract Body Transport	377
○ Total bodies transported to the Forensic Institute	578
Total External Autopsies	3
Total Partial Autopsies	0
➤ Total Complete Autopsies	490
Hospital Autopsies Retained Under Medical Examiner Jurisdiction	0
Microscopic Studies Performed	490
Neuropathologic Studies Performed	1
Cardiac Pathologic Studies Performed	0
Autopsies Performed for Outside Jurisdictions	139
Bodies Unidentified after Examination	0
▪ Organ Donors	17
Corneal Donors	39
Bone Donors	15
Connective Tissue Donors	9
Heart Valve Donors	6
Skin Donors	9
Unclaimed bodies	24
Exhumations	0

- Some decedents are not transported via contract transport; these include deaths that occur at Holy Family Hospital, where the Forensic Institute is housed; as well as deaths that occur in a referral county.
- Total complete autopsies includes both Spokane County cases and Referral County Cases.
 - Organ and tissue donation agencies must seek an okay from the Medical Examiner's office before proceeding with donation procedures.

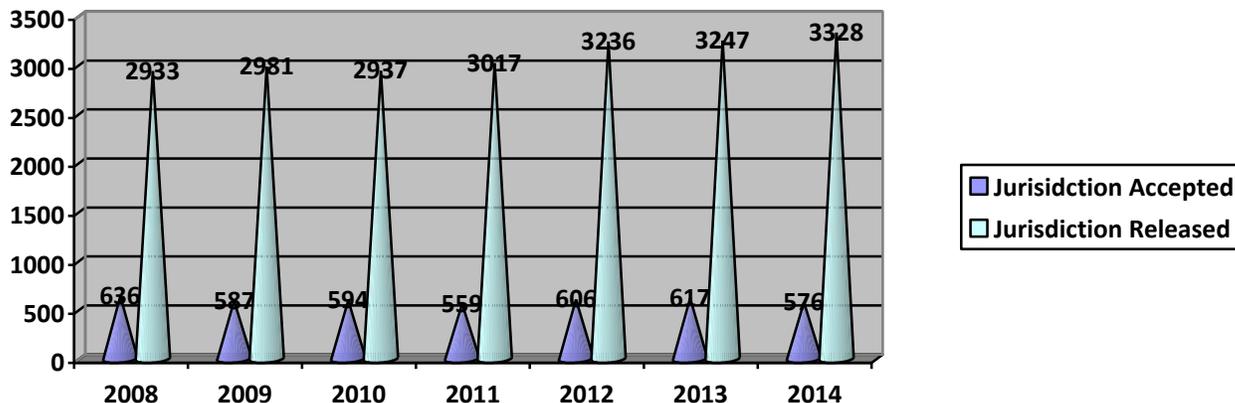
The statistical information which follows includes information regarding Spokane County Deaths only.

Spokane County Medical Examiner Cases in 2014

In 2014, there were 4,585 deaths in Spokane County. Based on the latest United States Census Bureau data the approximate population of Spokane County is 479,398. The 4,585 deaths thus represent approximately 1% of the population. Of these deaths, 3,904 or 85% of deaths were reported to the Medical Examiner. Based on analysis of the scene and circumstances of death, and the decedent's medical history, the Medical Examiner assumed jurisdiction in 576 (16%) of these reported deaths, or in 13% of all deaths in the county. These reporting figures and autopsy percentages are similar to other Medical Examiner jurisdictions nationally.

There were deaths reported to the Medical Examiner in which jurisdiction was released after investigation. The number of deaths reported to the Medical Examiner's Office is significantly greater each year than reported during the years as a coroner's system (before January 1, 1999).

The number of cases which were reported to the Medical Examiner but released after investigation has also steadily increased during the Medical Examiners years (1999 to present), reflecting efforts by the Medical Examiner’s Office to educate reporting agencies and encourage appropriate reporting of deaths to the Medical Examiner and also partly due to population growth. All nursing home and adult care facilities deaths are reported to the Medical Examiner’s Office allowing for appropriate agency analysis. This progressive Spokane County Medical Examiner Policy has been adopted recently by other Medical Examiner and coroner systems around the state.



Forensic Unit

The Forensic Unit works in the Sheriff’s department and provides crime scene documentation, fingerprint comparison and scene photo documentation at the direction of the Law Enforcement Agency with jurisdiction. The Medical Examiner’s office often partners with this group in the collection and preservation of evidence.

Chaplaincy Services

While there are no Washington State laws which require the Medical Examiner to identify and locate next-of-kin, by convention and practice in Spokane County, the Medical Examiner has been depended upon for identifying next-of-kin and for facilitating the locating and notifying of next-of-kin. The Medical Examiner’s Office is fortunate to have the assistance of the Chaplains from the Spokane County Sheriff’s Office and the Spokane Police Department in notifying family members. The staff of the Medical Examiner’s Office recognizes that the Chaplains have considerable experience and professional training to help in this difficult and emotional endeavor.

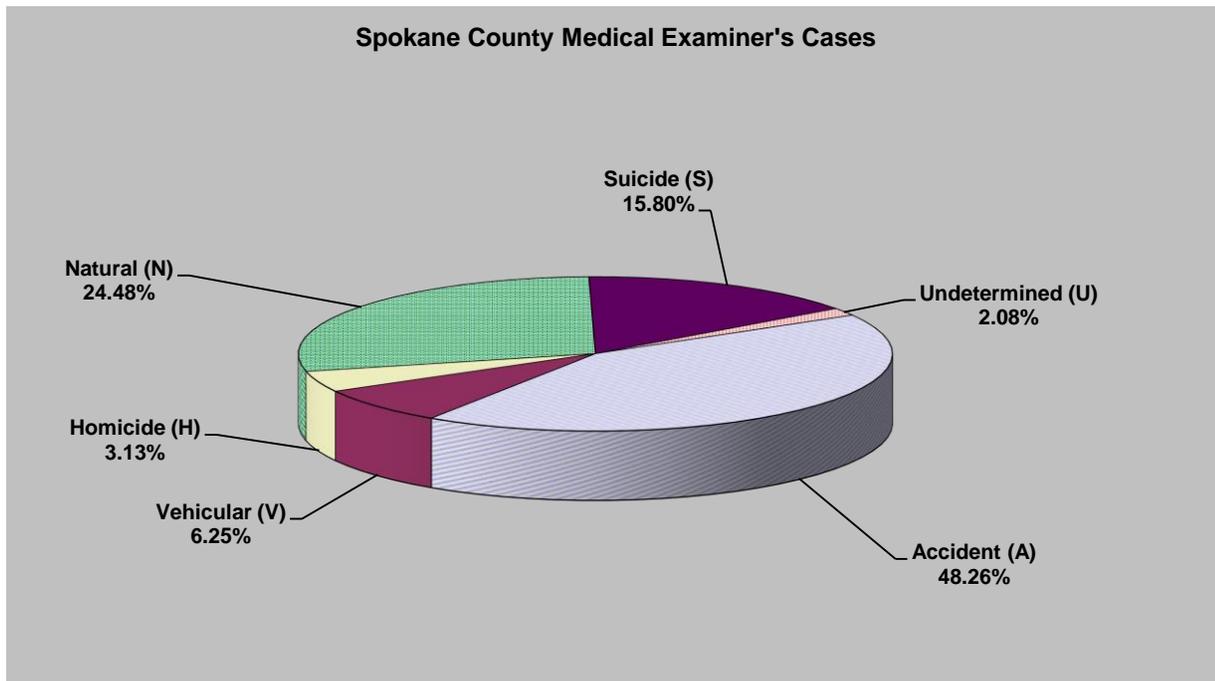
Section 2: Total Cases

Total Cases for 2014

Total Spokane County Population	479,398
Total Death in Spokane County	4,585
Total Death Reported to the Medical Examiner in 2014	3,904
Total Jurisdiction Release after Investigation	3,328
Total Spokane County Jurisdiction Assumed Cases	576
Total Spokane County Autopsies Performed	354

Cases by Manner of Death	Number of Deaths	Percent of Total
Accident (A)	278	48.26%
Vehicular (V)	36	6.25%
Homicide (H)	18	3.13%
Natural (N)	141	24.48%
Suicide (S)	91	15.80%
Undetermined (U)	12	2.08%

Total Cases for 2014



	Jurisdiction Released Cases	Outside Agency Deaths Reported (Adult Care Facilities, Nursing Homes, Hospice, etc)	❖ Spokane County Autopsies Completed	Referral County Autopsies Completed
January	116	176	30	18
February	99	157	26	13
March	121	179	19	9
April	107	174	32	12
May	105	171	41	15
June	94	144	34	12
July	107	150	30	11
August	107	195	29	11
September	102	185	24	7
October	103	152	28	8
November	102	183	32	12
December	111	188	29	11
Total	1274	2054	354	139

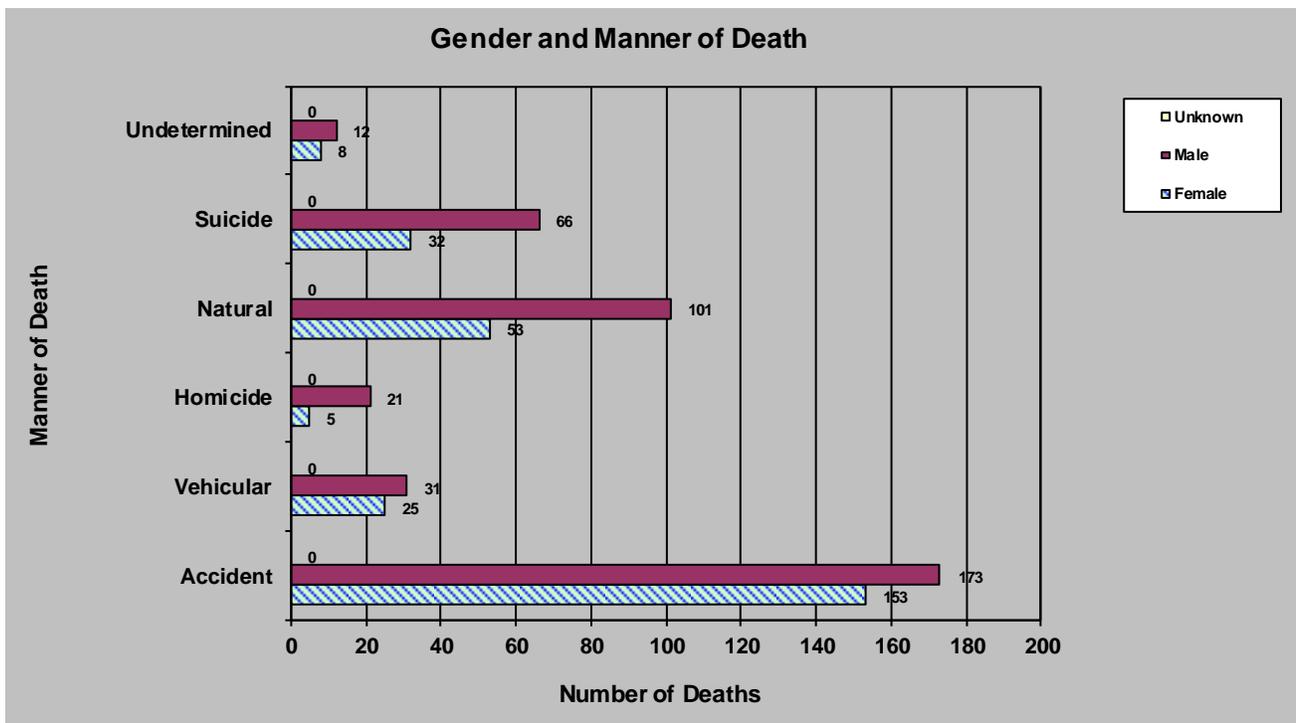
❖ Includes 351 full autopsies, 3 external only examinations and 0 partial examinations. In addition to the Spokane County autopsies, the Medical Examiner's Office performed 139 complete autopsies for neighboring referral counties.

Total Cases by Gender and Manner of Death

Gender and Manner Of Death

Sex	A	V	H	N	S	U	Total	Percent
Female	153	25	5	53	32	8	276	40.59%
Male	173	31	21	101	66	12	404	59.41%
Unknown	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.00%
Total	326	56	26	154	98	20	680	

The preponderance of males has been the historical norm in Spokane County, and is similar to the experience/practice of most other medical examiner systems.



Predominance of male gender in all categories of death coming under the jurisdiction of the Medical Examiner’s Office reflects the experience of most death investigation systems. In most death investigation systems, this male predominance begins in infancy and extends to near the end of life spans. While females statistically attempt suicide more often than males, males more often succeed.

Total Jurisdiction Assumed (JA) Cases by Race and Manner of Death

	Race and Manner of Death						Total	% of Spokane County Deaths
	A	H	N	S	U	V		
Asian	1	0	2	1	0	1	5	0.11%
Black	10	1	4	3	0	0	18	0.39%
Caucasian	240	14	124	83	10	27	498	10.86%
Hispanic	3	3	4	0	2	2	14	0.30%
Native American	6	0	2	2	0	4	14	0.30%
Other	1	0	1	1	0	1	4	0.08%
Unknown	17	0	4	1	0	1	23	0.50%
	278	18	141	91	12	36	576	

These reflect the demographics of Spokane County, where the Caucasian race predominates statistically. Race determination is required on the death certificate.

Total Jurisdiction Assumed (JA) Cases by Age Group and Manner of Death

In Jurisdiction Assumed (JA) cases, the Medical Examiner assumes responsibility for signing the death certificate. In 354 cases an autopsy was performed. In 222 cases the death certificate was signed based on death investigation and/or medical records.

Age and Manner of Death							
Age Group (Years)		A	H	N	S	U	V
0 to 9	19	2	3	9	0	4	1
10 to 19	21	6	1	1	10	0	3
20 to 29	62	22	4	9	14	3	10
30 to 39	67	28	6	10	16	2	5
40 to 49	64	20	5	14	16	3	6
50 to 59	118	32	5	50	18	4	9
60 to 69	95	40	2	33	10	2	8
70 to 79	76	45	0	17	5	2	7
80 to 89	89	67	0	9	7	0	6
90 to 99	65	60	0	2	2	0	1
100 to 109	4	4	0	0	0	0	0
Total	680	326	26	154	98	20	56

In the 0-9 age group, sudden unexplained infant deaths (SIDS or SUID) are classified as Natural in this jurisdiction. In older Spokane County deaths (age 70 plus) accidents predominate, and most result from falls with fractures or head injuries leading to death.

Total Jurisdiction Assumed (JA) Cases by Age Group and Gender

Age Group (Years)		Female	Male
0 to 9	19	7	12
10 to 19	12	3	9
20 to 29	40	9	31
30 to 39	37	12	25
40 to 49	76	24	52
50 to 59	117	34	83
60 to 60	83	21	62
70 to 79	43	20	23
89 to 89	91	45	46
90 to 99	55	43	12
100 to 109	3	3	0
Total	576	221	355

Males exceed females in each age group excluding 90 to 99 years and 100 TO 109.

Out of Area Incidents Leading to Death in Spokane County

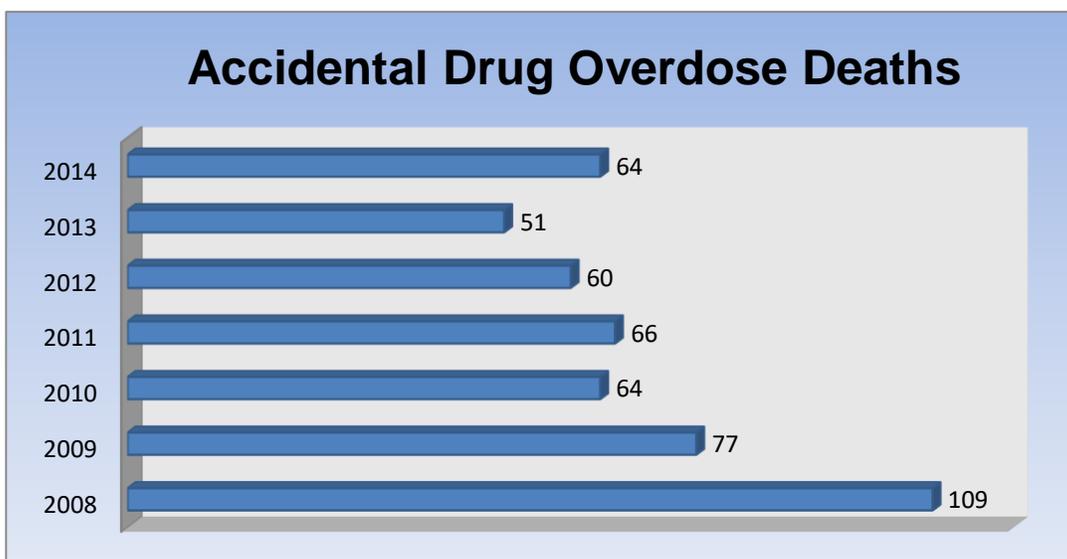
In 2014 there were a total of 46 cases in which an event occurred outside of Spokane County that led to eventual death in Spokane County. According to Washington State law, Medical Examiner and Coroner jurisdiction is based upon where the death occurs. The majority of these cases were transfers from out of county or out of state hospitals to one of the Spokane County hospitals. The manners of death in these cases are: 31 accidents, 2 homicides, 9 motor vehicle accidents, 2 natural, 1 suicide, and 1 undetermined. Nearly 1/3 of the 46 (13 total) originated in Stevens County Washington. Another ten were from out of Washington State. Please see the link to the data below.

[Out of Area Incidents Leading to Death in Spokane County](#)

Section 3: Multi-Year Comparison

The Medical Examiner’s Office replaced the coroner’s system on January 1, 1999. From 1999 to present, the number of Spokane County deaths which have fallen under the jurisdiction of the Medical Examiner System has ranged from a low of 550 to a high of 635, with the number of autopsies performed typically under 450.

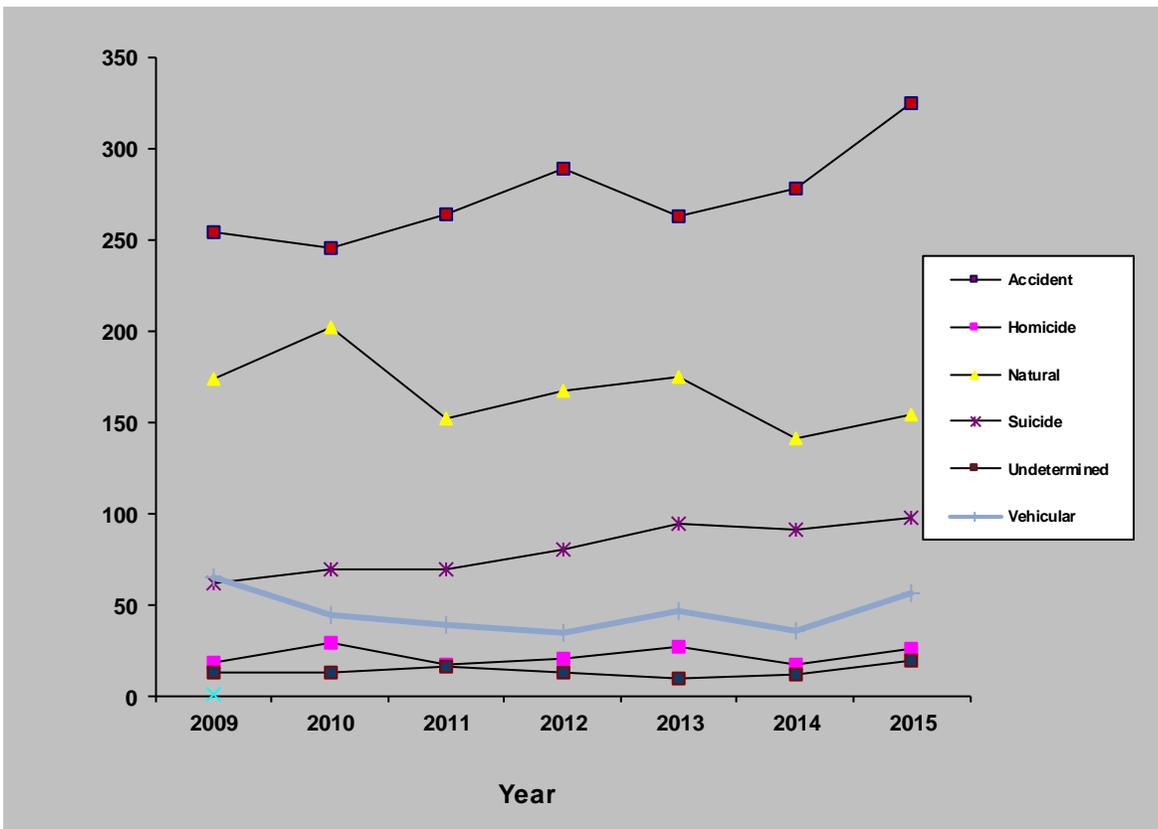
Overdose deaths may be classified as “accidents”. The federal government data categorizes overdose deaths as “unintentional poisoning deaths”. Federal data indicates that poisoning deaths have increased significantly in the last decade. Most of the poisoning death increases have resulted from prescription medications or a combination of illicit and prescription drugs. Data below shows accidental drug overdose deaths in Spokane County, in which prescription and/or illicit drugs were demonstrated in toxicology.



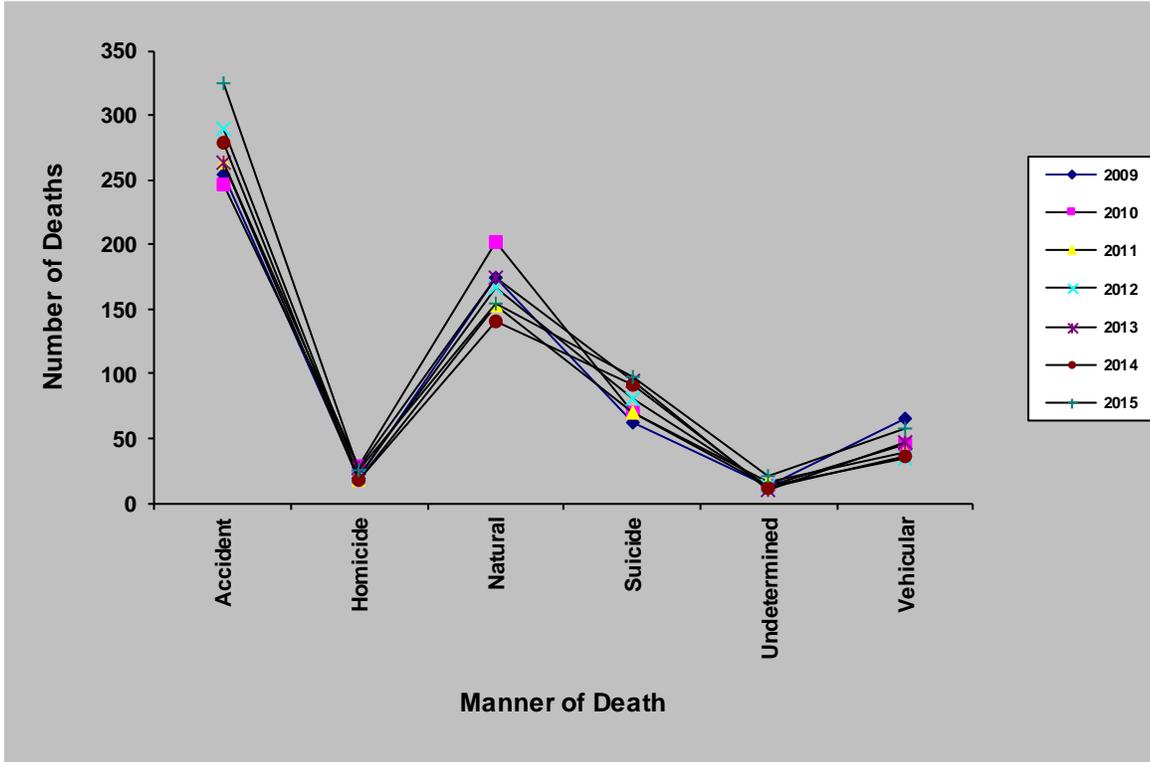
Manner Of Deaths Comparison (Jurisdiction Assumed – JA Deaths)

Comparison of Manners of Death 2008-2014

Manner of Death	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Accident	254	246	264	289	263	278	326
Homicide	19	29	18	21	27	18	26
Natural	174	202	152	167	175	140	154
Suicide	62	70	70	80	95	91	98
Undetermined	13	13	16	13	10	13	20
Vehicular	65	45	39	35	47	36	56
Total	587	605	559	605	617	576	680



Medical Examiner Homicide numbers may not mirror the Police Department reports of homicide deaths, because the Medical Examiner certification of homicide is broader in some situations and more narrow in others. The Medical Examiner is using these classifications for the purposes of statistical analysis based on death certificate classification. As above these categories of death certification remain relatively stable through the years. The office has been releasing jurisdiction in more natural deaths, but assumes jurisdiction for more accidents.



The proportions of the manners of death have remained remarkably similar through the years.

Manner of Death	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Accident	43.27%	40.66%	47.23%	47.77%	42.63%	48.26%	47.94%
Homicide	3.24%	4.79%	3.22%	3.47%	4.38%	3.13%	3.82%
Natural	29.64%	33.39%	27.19%	27.60%	28.36%	24.31%	24.48%
Suicide	10.56%	11.57%	12.52%	13.22%	15.40%	15.80%	14.41%
Undetermined	2.21%	2.15%	2.86%	2.15%	1.62%	2.26%	2.08%
Vehicular	11.07%	7.44%	6.98%	5.79%	7.62%	6.25%	8.24%

Ideally, a Medical Examiner System strives to keep the percentage of “undetermined” manner of death cases to less than five percent. This requires thorough investigation and autopsy. In the Spokane County Medical Examiner’s Office, every “undetermined” manner case is reviewed as part of the office Quality Improvement Program.

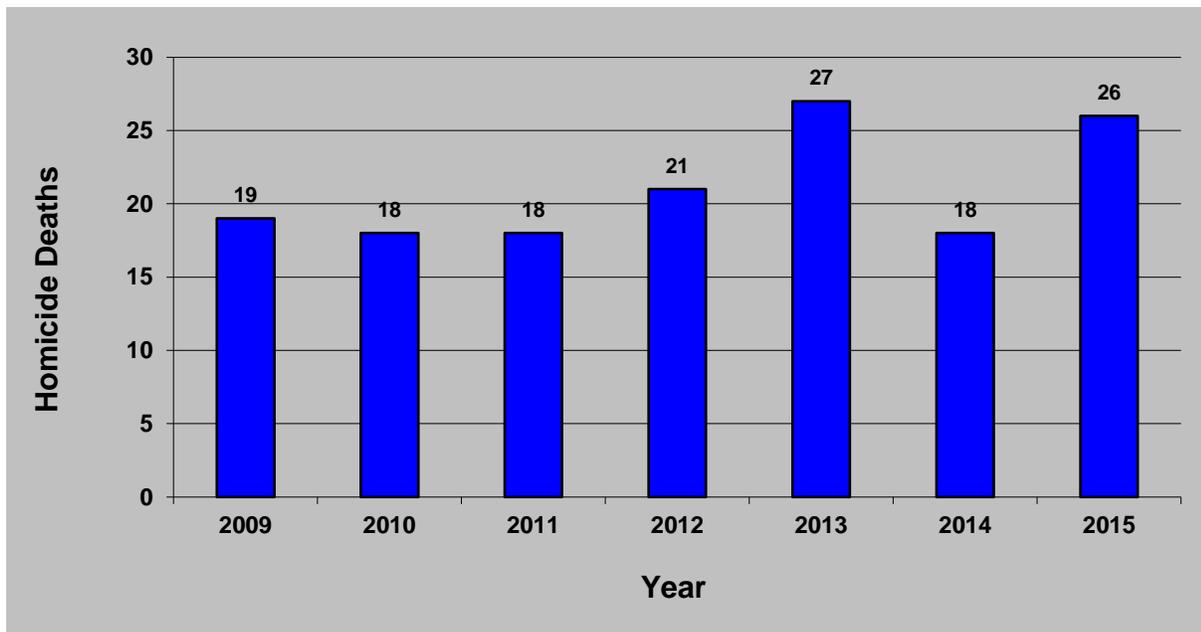
Homicidal Methods Comparison

Comparison of Homicidal Methods 2009 - 2015

Method Used	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Asphyxia	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
Blunt Impact	0	0	1	0	1	0	0
Child Abuse	2	2	1	1	1	0	2
Firearms	7	12	9	11	19	12	12
Homicidal Violence	3	1	2	1	1	2	0
Other	1	1	4	0	3	0	6
Stabbing	6	0	0	3	0	3	3
Strangulation	0	1	1	5	2	1	2
Unknown	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	19	18	18	21	27	18	26

The number of homicides in Spokane County is small enough that collected data cannot be extensively interpreted.

Homicides 2009 - 2015

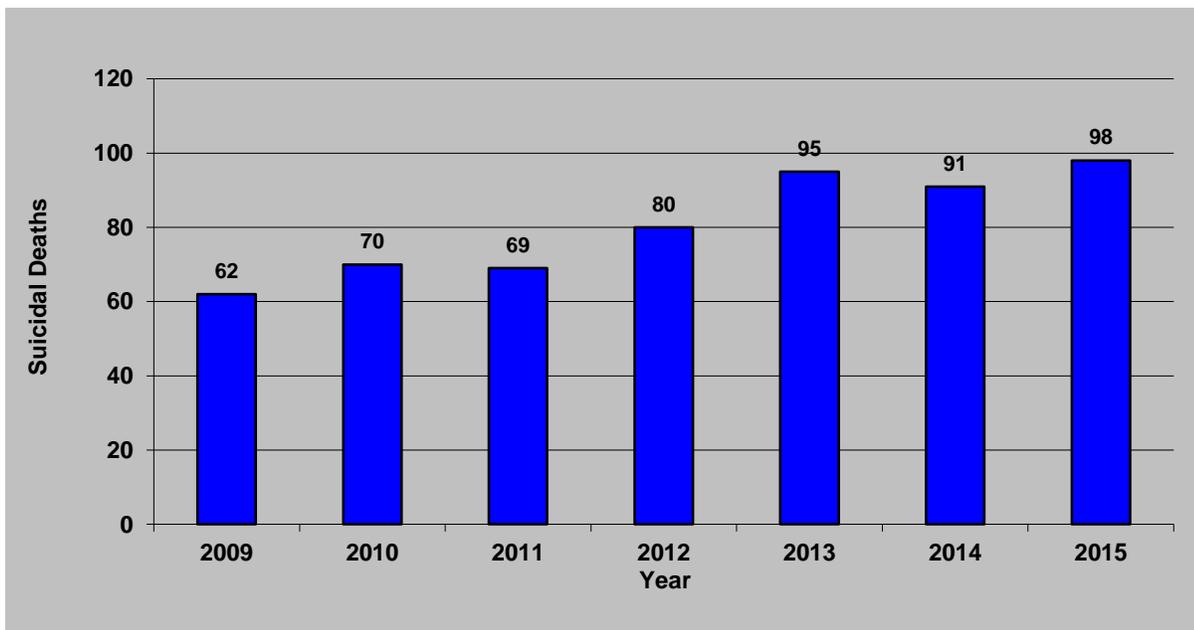


Suicidal Methods Comparison

Comparison of Suicidal Methods 2009 - 2015

Method Used	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Carbon Monoxide	1	1	3	1	4	2	0
Drowning	0	1	0	3	0	5	1
Drugs/Poisons	7	13	12	11	15	7	19
Firearms	37	35	39	42	44	54	46
Hanging	15	13	7	15	23	16	23
Jumping	1	3	3	4	2	1	2
Other	1	2	2	0	3	1	3
Plastic Bag	0	0	2	3	2	3	3
Stab/incised wound	0	2	1	1	2	2	1
Total	62	70	69	80	95	91	98

Suicides 2009 - 2015



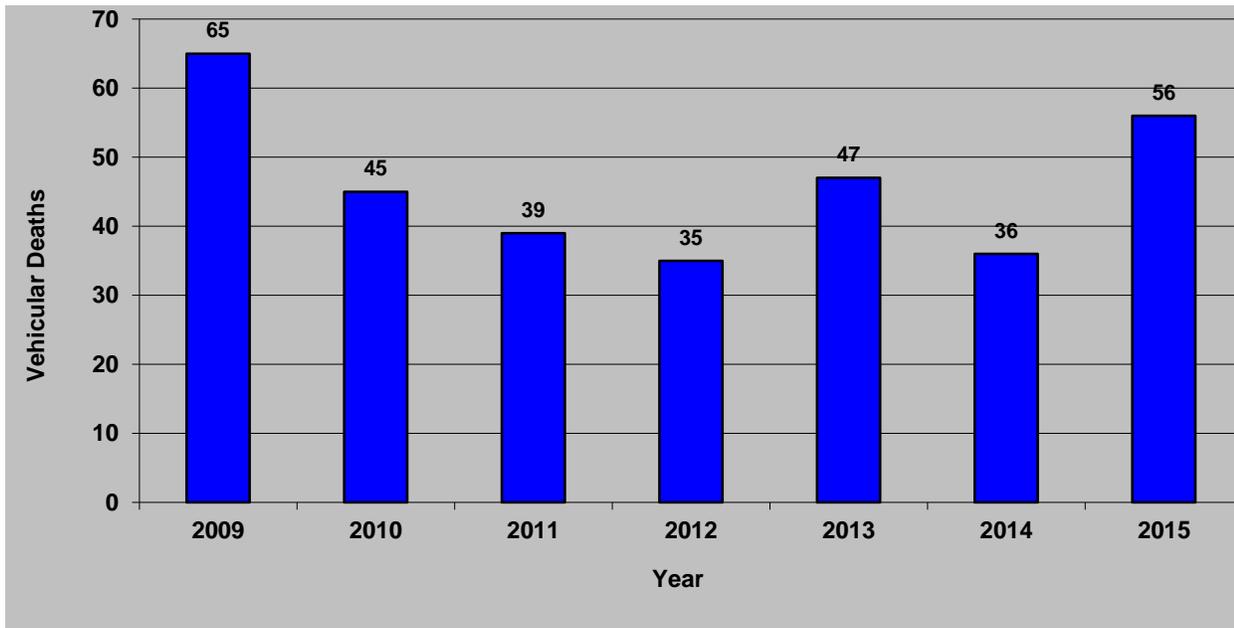
Vehicular Deaths Comparison

Vehicular-related fatalities are separated from other accidents because some community groups have special statistical interests in examining vehicular-related deaths.

Comparison of Vehicular Deaths 2009 - 2015

Vehicle Circumstances	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Automobile Driver	29	19	20	12	19	20	22
Automobile Passenger	10	11	4	3	14	2	11
Bicyclist	1	3	1	1	0	2	1
Motorcycle Driver	6	6	8	6	8	5	6
Motorcycle Passenger	3	1	0	0	0	1	0
Other	1	2	0	1	0	1	2
Pedestrian	14	2	6	9	5	5	11
Unknown	1	1	0	3	1	0	3
Total	65	45	39	35	47	36	56

Vehicular Deaths 2009 - 2015



Accidental Deaths Comparison

Comparison of Accidental Deaths 2009 - 2015

Accident Circumstances	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Aircraft	0	1	0	0	0	0	4
Alcohol Abuse	5	1	1	1	8	2	5
Anaphylaxis	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
Asphyxiation	1	2	1	4	3	6	3
Aspiration	3	2	0	4	0	1	2
Bicycle Fall	0	1	1	1	0	1	1
Boating	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Choking	2	3	5	6	1	7	6
Drowning	2	7	7	8	7	5	7
Drugs (any illicit present)	41	24	36	30	33	30	66
Prescribed Drugs (no illicit)	36	40	30	43	24	32	16
Electrocution	0	1	1	0	0	0	0
Fall	143	137	167	172	156	174	179
Farm	1	3	0	0	0	0	1
Fire/burns	5	8	6	3	3	3	5
Firearms	2	2	0	1	3	0	1
Hyperthermia	0	0	0	0	0	1	4
Hypothermia	3	2	2	2	8	3	15
Industrial Accident	1	2	0	1	2	3	1
Motorcycle Driver (race track)	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
Other	9	9	6	13	13	7	9
Surgical Procedure	0	1	0	0	1	0	0
Therapy Complication	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
Total	254	246	264	289	263	276	326

Toxicology may show numerous combinations of medications and illicit drugs, but such deaths are categorized in the chart above as “Drugs”.

Drug Overdose Data Summary 2014

Overview

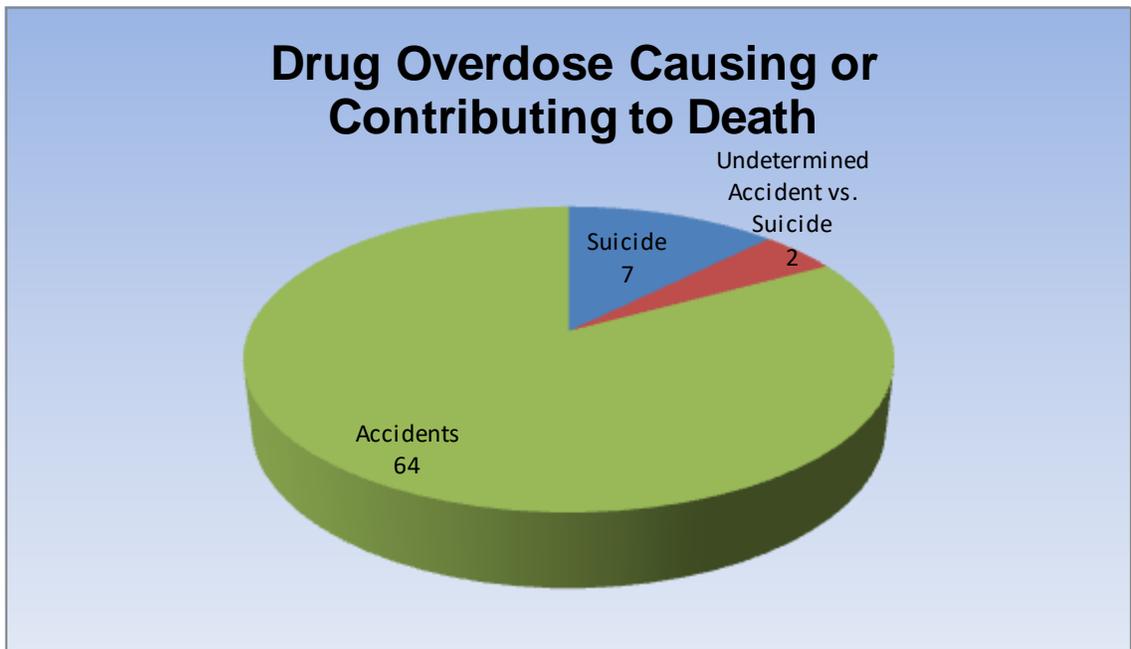
In 2014 a total of 73 deaths had prescription/and or illicit drugs listed on the death certificate as causing or contributing to death.

Drug Overdose causing or contributing to 73 deaths:

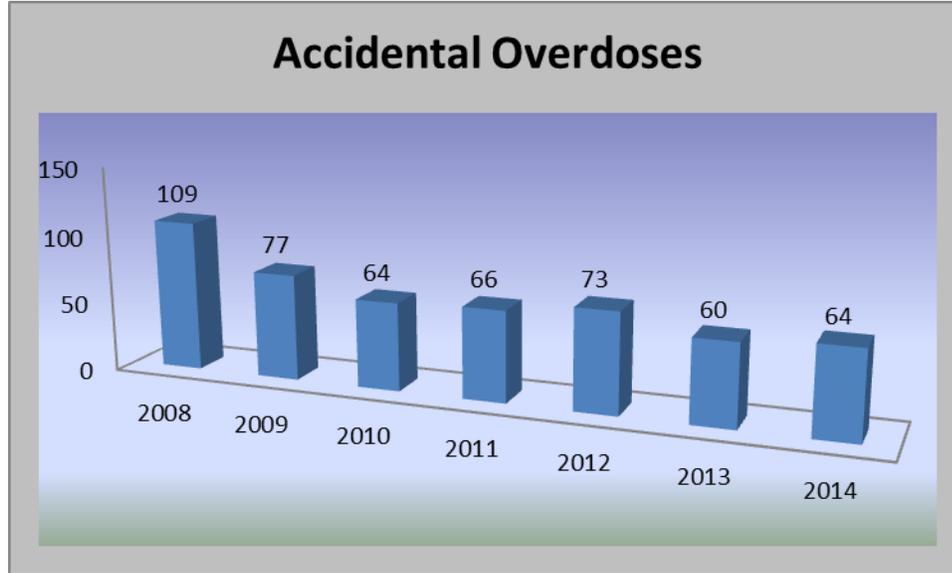
- 7 deaths suicide
- 2 deaths undetermined accident vs. suicide
- 64 deaths accidents

Of the 64 accident/overdose deaths:

- 17 were caused by combinations of illicit, prescription, ethanol
- 2 were caused by ethanol (alcohol) alone
- 24 were illicit only such as methamphetamine
- 20 were prescription drugs only
- 1 the drug(s)/medication(s) are unknown due to long interval (years) between event and death and resultant lack of records

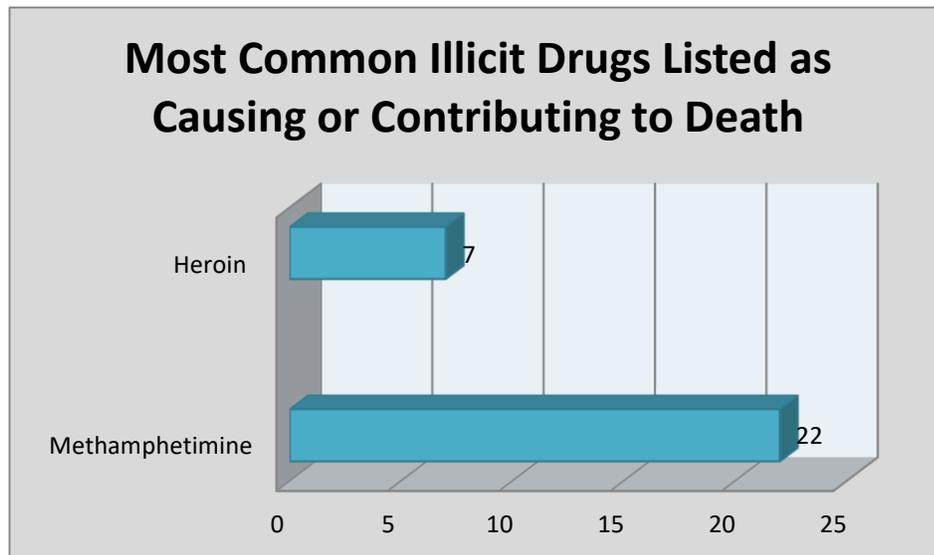


The 64 Spokane County accidental deaths caused by illicit drugs, prescription drugs, and combinations of the two (plus some with ethanol) are comparable to the United States Centers of Disease Control term “unintentional poisoning deaths”.



Two of the 64 accidental overdoses were caused by alcohol toxicity not in combination with any other drugs or medications.

Most Common Illicit Drugs



The above chart represents the most common illicit drugs found in Accidental Deaths in Spokane County in 2014. These are listings in both the primary cause of death as well as the contributing factors.

2014 Most Common Opioids (plus Benzodiazepines) Listed as Causing or Contributing to Accidental Death

Opioid (plus ** benzodiazepines)

Hydrocodone	13
Oxycodone	12
Methadone	9
Morphine	7
Hydromorphone	5
Fentanyl	4
Oxymorphone	2
** Benzodiazepines	11

The above table represents the most common opioids found in Accidental Deaths in Spokane County in 2014. These are listings in both the primary cause of death as well as the contributing factors.

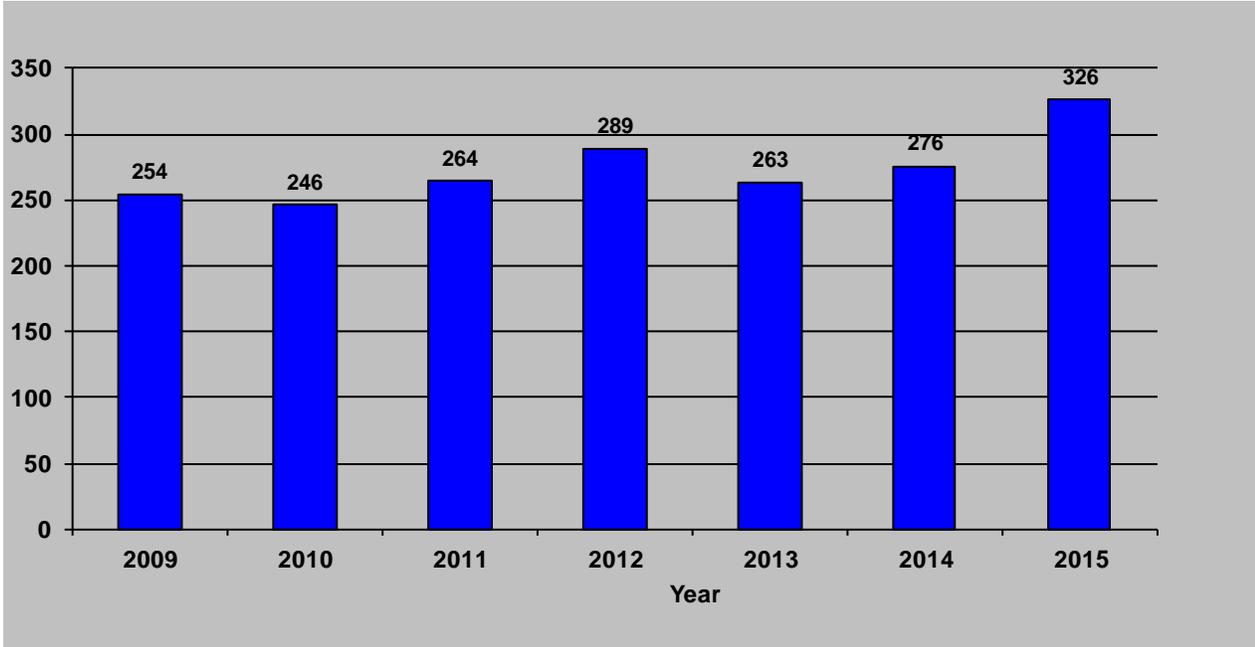
** Though benzodiazepines are not opioids they are included with the opioids as national data which indicates that benzodiazepines are often seen in combination with opioids in prescription medication deaths.

Source of Medications / Drugs

Of the 37 accidental overdose death attributable partly or wholly to prescription medications, investigation showed that prescriptions belonged to the decedent in only 12 deaths. In most of the other deaths, the source of the prescriptions was unknown.

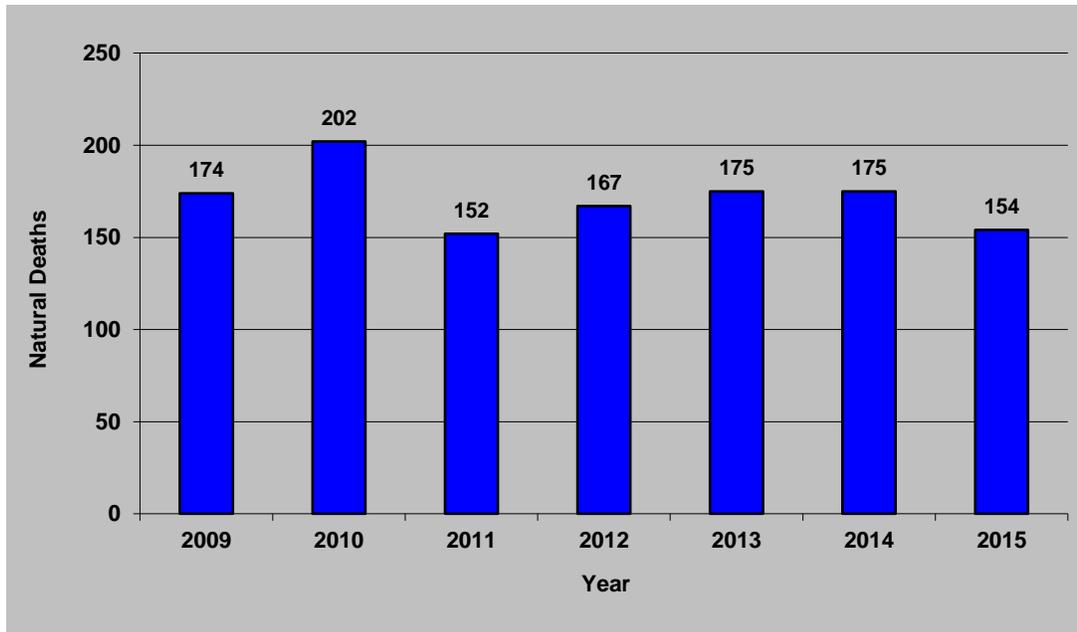
Accidental Deaths Comparison (Jurisdiction Assumed – JA Deaths)

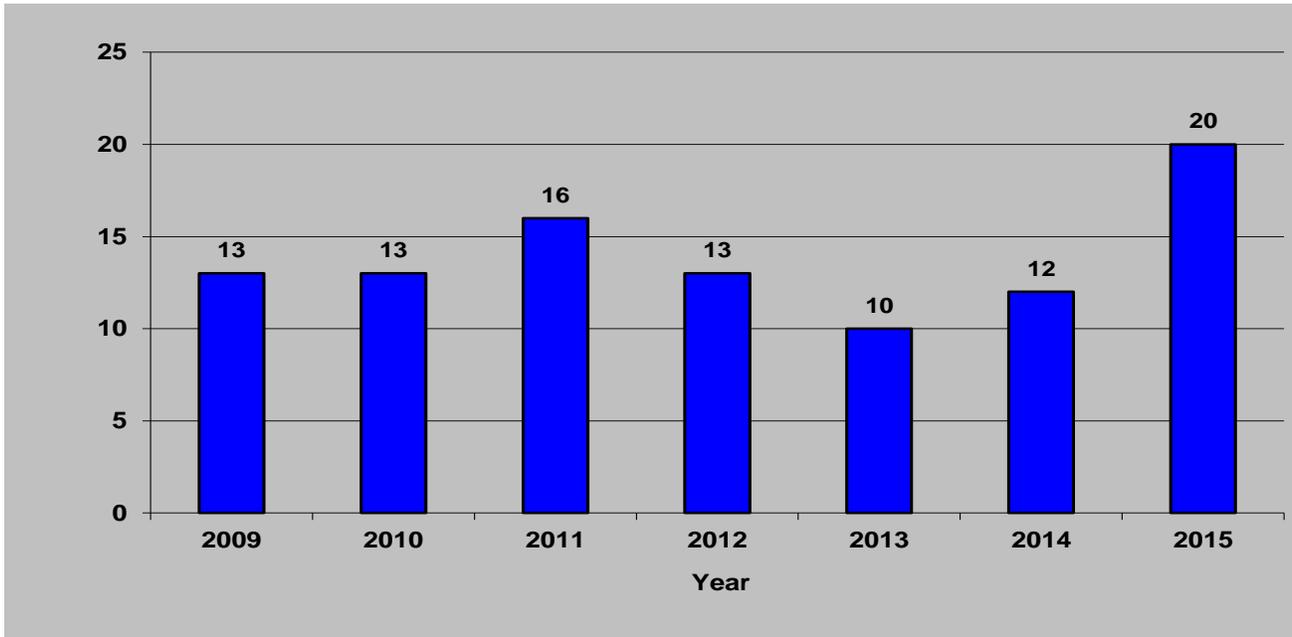
Accidental Deaths 2008-2014



Natural Deaths Comparison (Jurisdiction Assumed-JA Deaths)

Natural Deaths 2009 - 2015



Undetermined Deaths Comparison (Jurisdiction Assumed – JA Deaths)**Deaths of Undetermined Manner 2009 - 2015**

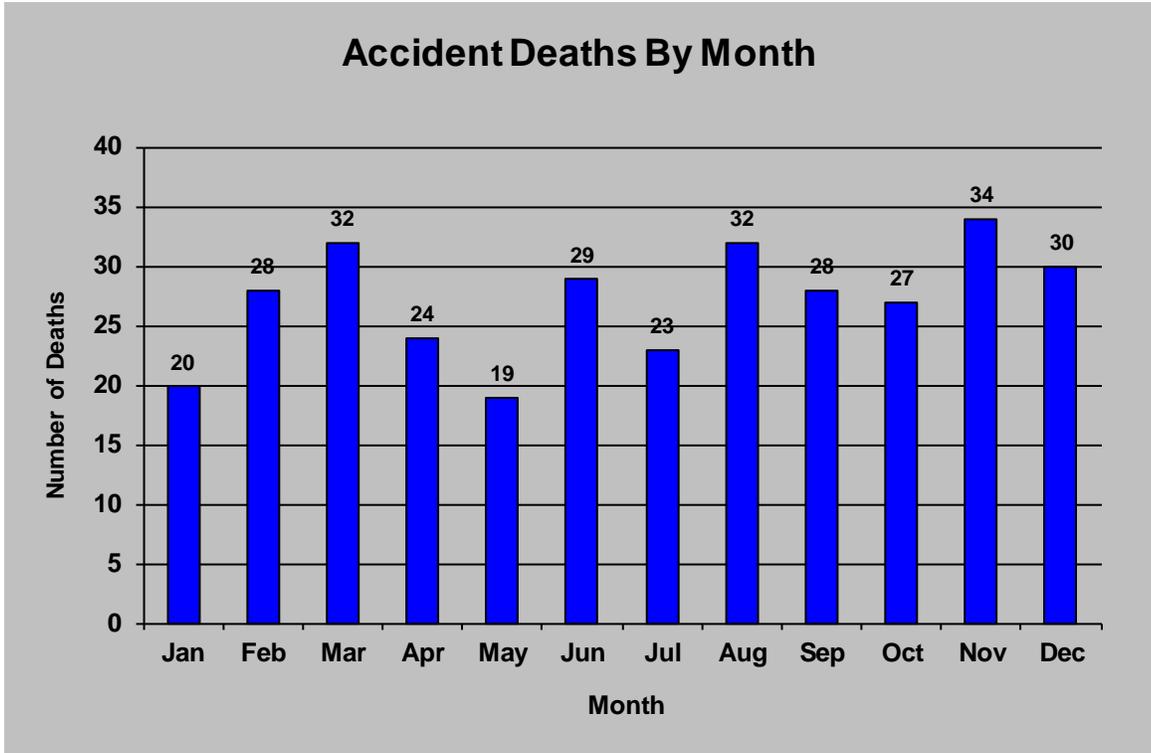
Ideally the Medical Examiner Systems use the undetermined manner of death category in less than five percent of cases. This reflects fullest utilization of investigation and decedent autopsy. In 2014, the undetermined classification was used in 2.08% of Spokane Medical Examiner cases.

Undetermined manner is used in a wide array of circumstances. An example is an “overdose” death, wherein the intent is unknown despite investigation.

Section 4: Manner of Death

ACCIDENT

Accident Deaths in Jurisdiction Assumed (JA) Cases by Month



Accident Mode by Gender

As noted elsewhere in this report, the majority of deaths investigated by the Medical Examiner are in males.

Accident Mode By Gender

Accident Mode	Female	Male	Total
Aircraft	0	4	4
Alcohol Abuse	4	1	5
Asphyxiation	2	1	3
Aspiration	2	0	2
Bicycle Fall	0	1	1
Choking	1	5	6
Drowning	2	5	7
Drugs	15	51	66
Prescribed Drugs	11	5	16
Fall	100	79	179
Farm	0	1	1
Fire/burns	1	4	5
Hyperthermia	3	1	4
Hypothermia	8	7	15
Industrial Accident	0	1	1
Other	3	5	8

Accident Mode by Gender and Age Group (Autopsy Cases)

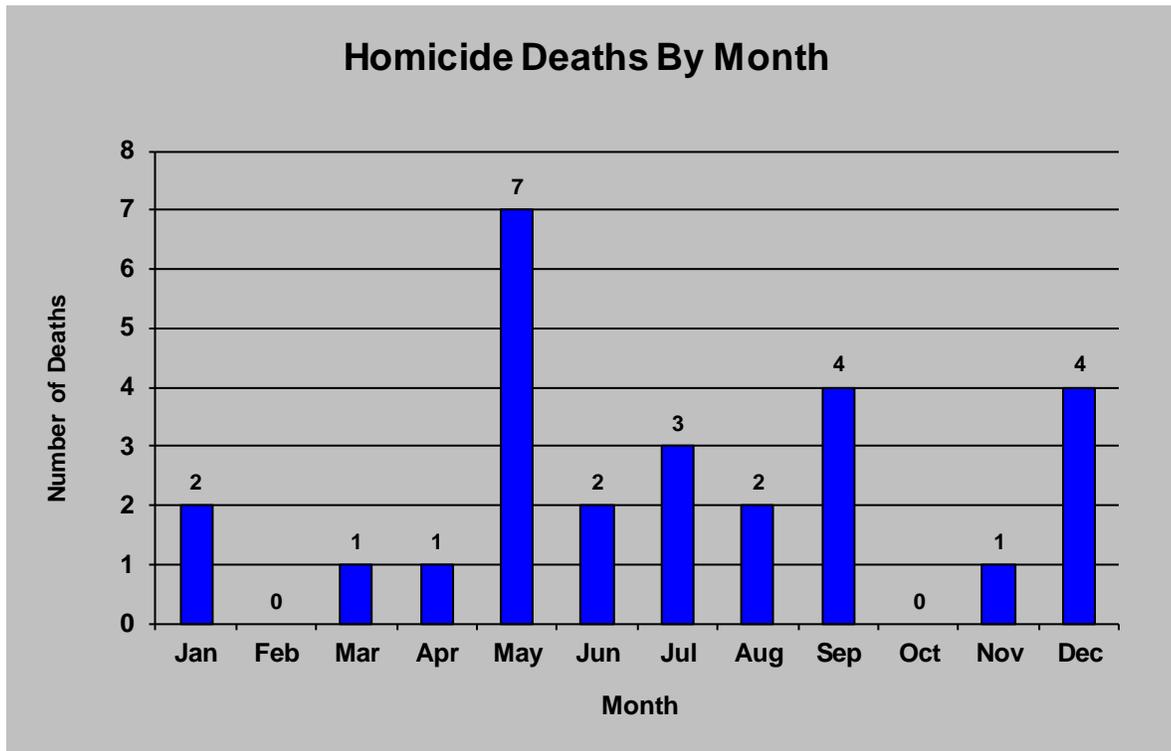
Accident Mode	Sex	<1	1-9	10-19	20-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60-69	70-79	80-89	90-99	>=100	Total
Alcohol Abuse	Female	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
Alcohol Abuse	Male	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Alcohol Abuse Total														2
Asphyxiation	Female	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	3
Asphyxiation	Male	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	3
Asphyxiation Total														6
Aspiration	Male	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
Aspiration Total														1
Bicycle Fall	Male	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Bicycle Fall Total														1
Choking	Female	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	4
Choking	Male	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	3
Choking Total														7
Drowning	Female	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
Drowning	Male	0	2	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	4
Drowning Total														5
Drugs	Female	0	0	0	0	2	3	3	0	0	0	0	0	8
Drugs	Male	0	0	0	5	4	6	5	2	0	0	0	0	22
Drugs Total														30
Prescribed Drugs	Female	0	0	1	1	1	4	6	1	2	0	0	0	16
Prescribed Drugs	Male	0	0	0	3	2	6	3	2	0	0	0	0	16
Prescribed Drugs Total														32
Fall	Female	0	0	0	0	0	3	2	9	9	38	33	3	97
Fall	Male	0	0	0	0	1	0	10	10	12	36	10	0	79
Fall Total														176
Fire/burns	Female	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	2
Fire/burns	Male	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
Fire/Burns Total														3
Hyperthermia	Female	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
Hyperthermia Total														1
Hypothermia	Female	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
Hypothermia	Male	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	2
Hypothermia Total														3
Industrial Accident	Male	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	3
Industrial Accident Total														3
Other	Male	2	0	0	0	0	0	2	2	0	1	0	0	7
Other Total														7
Therapy Complication	Female	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
Therapy Complication Total														1
Grand Total		3	3	3	9	14	25	37	32	26	77	46	3	278

Falls that result in mortality are significantly correlated with increasing age. Illicit and prescription drug deaths peak in middle ages in Spokane County.

HOMICIDE

In 2014 the recorded 18 homicides represents a decrease of 9 from the previous year. Firearms accounted for the single largest method of homicide (12 of 18). Firearms also accounted for the largest number of deaths by suicide. The most frequent age groups of homicide victims in 2014 was 30-39 and 40-49 years.

Homicide Deaths by Month



Homicide Deaths by Method, Gender, and Age Group

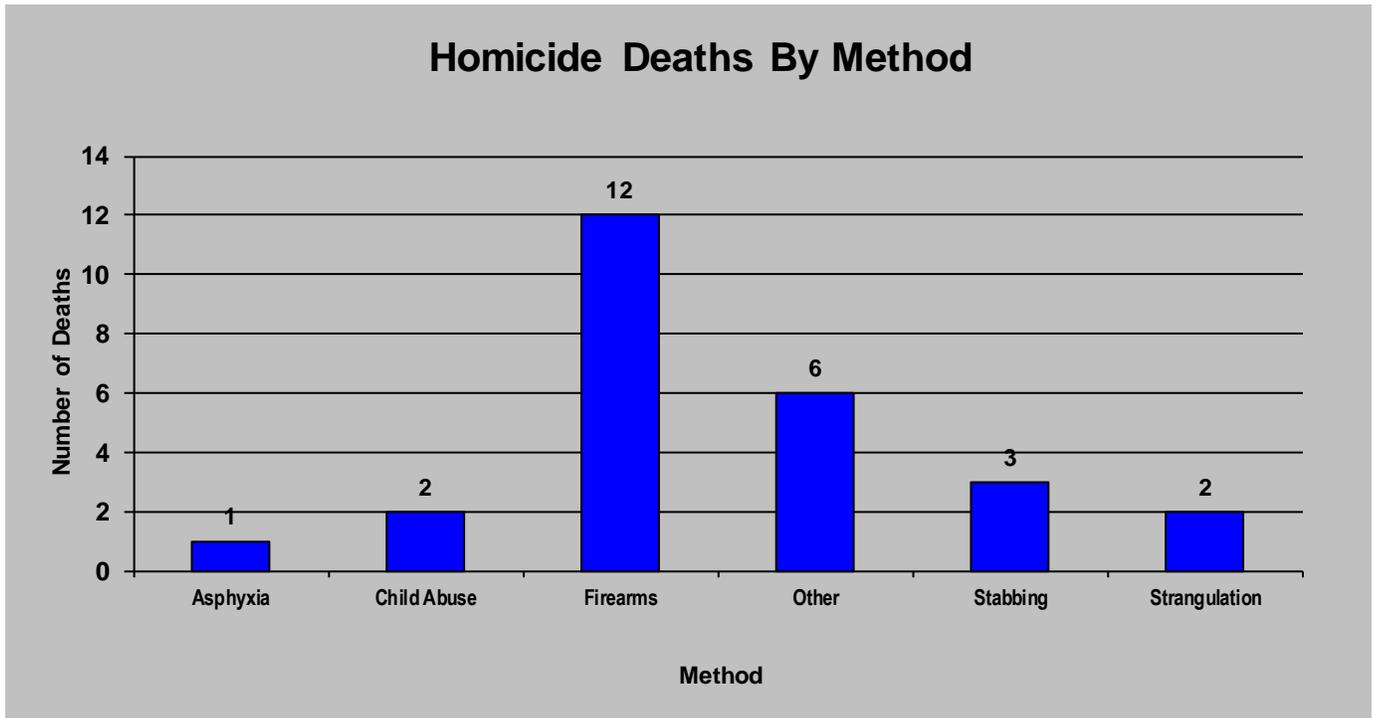
Homicide Method	Sex	<1	1-9	10-19	20-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60-69	70-79	80-89	90-99	>=100	Total
Firearms	Female	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Firearms	Male	0	0	0	3	3	3	2	0	0	0	0	0	11
Firearms Total														12
Homicidal Violence	Female	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
Homicidal Violence	Male	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Homicidal Violence Total														2
Stabbing	Female	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Stabbing	Male	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	2
Stabbing Total														3
Strangulation	Male	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Strangulation Total														1
Grand Total		0	1	0	3	4	6	3	1	0	0	0	0	18

Homicide Deaths by Age Group



This graph is limited statistically by the small number of total deaths it represents.

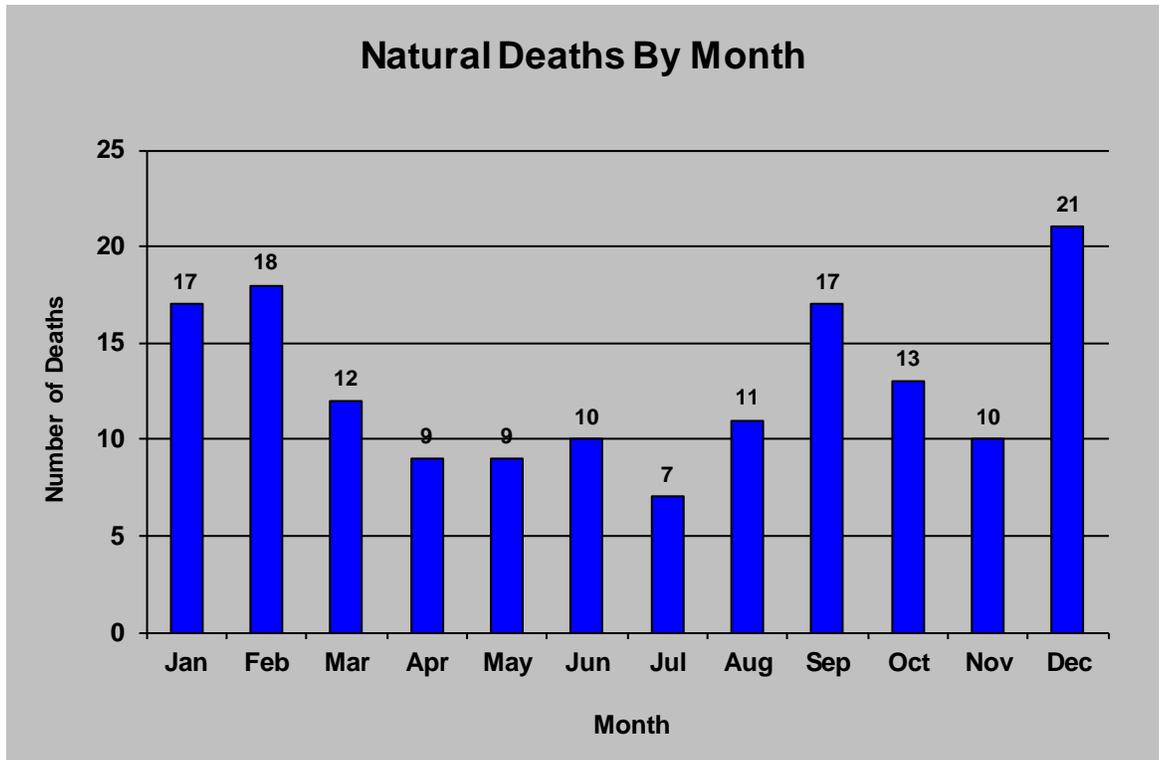
Homicide Deaths by Method



NATURAL

Typically, the Medical Examiner’s Office assumes jurisdiction in cases of natural death when the death occurs in a young age group without medical history and is therefore unexpected.

Natural Deaths by Month (Jurisdiction Assumed – JA Deaths)



Natural Deaths by Disease Process

Natural Deaths by Disease Process

AA= Alcohol Abuse
 C= Cardiovascular
 CNV= Central Nervous System
 M= Malignancy
 OF= Organ Failure
 O= Other
 R= Respiratory
 S= Seizure Disorder
 U= Undetermined

(Total # of Natural Deaths including those not examined by full autopsy.)

	AA	C	M	OF	O	R	S	U	TOTAL
Acute Myocardial Infarct		1							1
Aspiration of Gastric Contents					1				1
Asthma						1			1
Atherosclerotic Cardiovascular Disease		60							60
Cardiomyopathy		13							13
Chronic Alcoholism	4								4
Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease						7			7
Cirrhosis of the Liver	1								1
Congestive heart failure		1							1
Coronary Thrombosis		1							1
Diabetes Mellitus					4				4
Dissecting Aneurysm		1							1
Emphysema						1			1
Epilepsy							1		1
Gastrointestinal Bleed					4				4
Lung Cancer			1						1
Malnutrition					1				1
Myocardial Infarction		2							2
Other		3	1	3	2				9
Pancreatitis					4				4
Peritonitis					1				1
Pneumonia						8			8
Pulmonary embolism						1			1
Septicemia					1				1
SIDS					6				6
Undetermined								5	5
Ventricular Fibrillation		1							1
Total	5	83	2	3	24	18	1	5	141

“Undetermined Natural Cause” is sometimes assigned to a death in a very elderly person, without evidence of injury, with little or no medical history, when an autopsy is not performed.

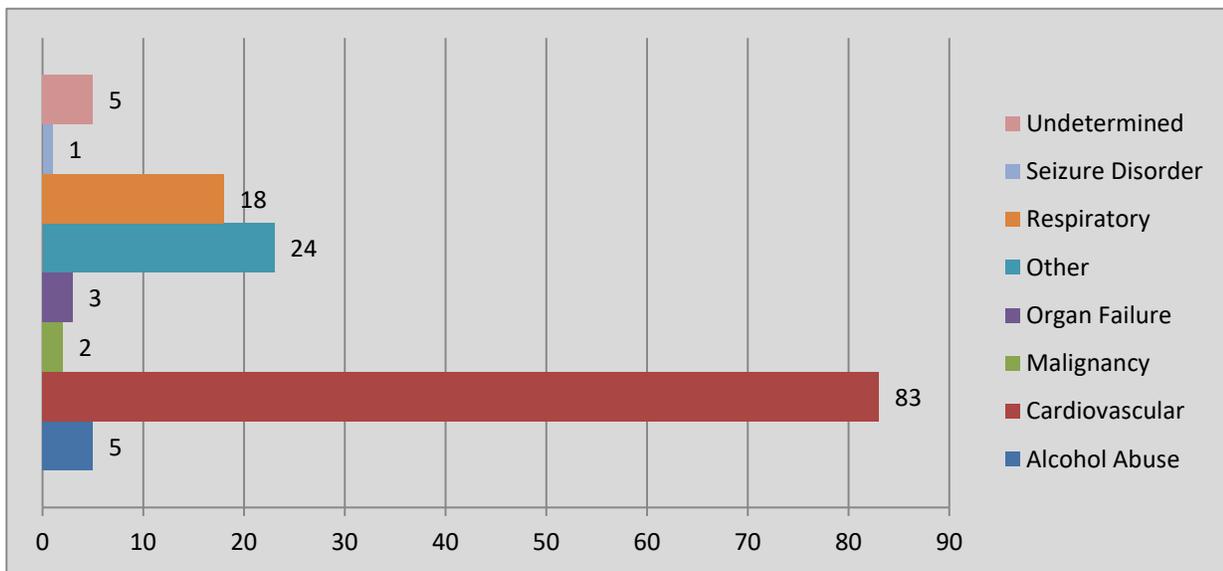
Natural Deaths by Category (Jurisdiction Assumed – JA Deaths)

The high proportion of deaths related to the cardiovascular system is typical of national statistics defining the categories of natural deaths. By convention, in most Medical Examiner and Coroner’s offices, alcohol abuse is considered “natural”.

The cancer deaths are usually not diagnosed until autopsy or are investigated for mitigating circumstances such as concern of overdose.

Cause of Natural Deaths by Category

Natural Deaths by Category



Natural Deaths by Disease Process and Gender

Disease Process By Gender

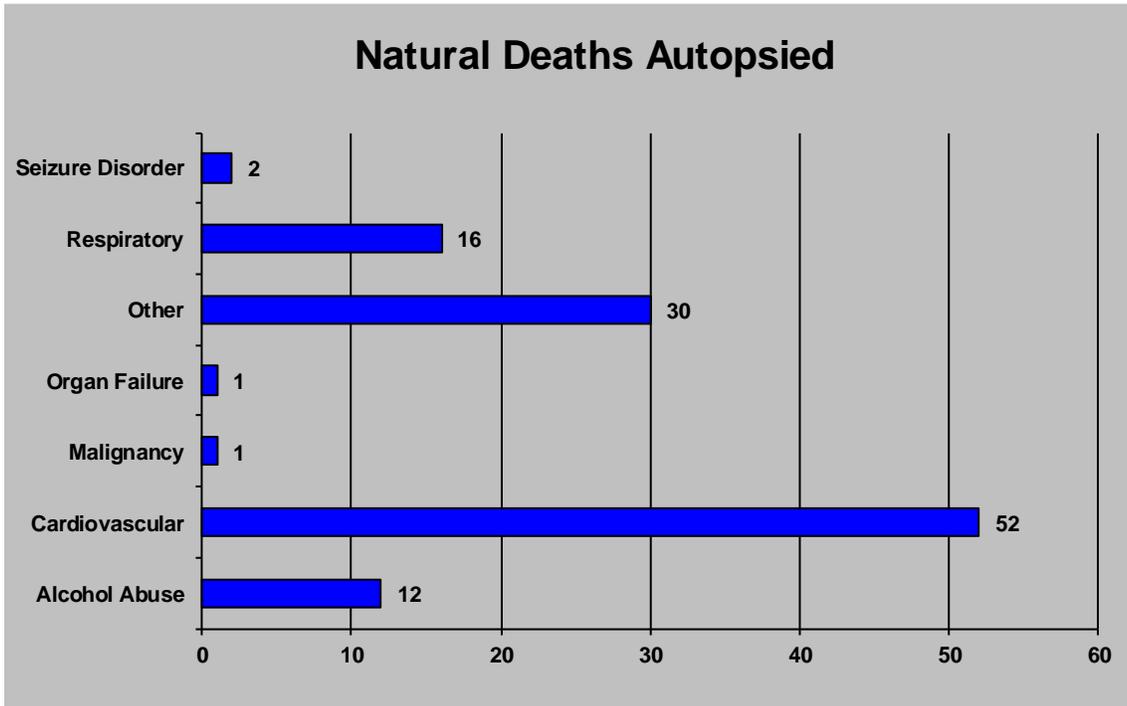
Disease Process	Female	Male	Unknown	Total
Alcohol Abuse	5	0	0	5
Cardiovascular	21	62	0	83
Malignancy	0	2	0	2
Organ Failure	0	3	0	3
Other	13	9	0	22
Respiratory	6	14	0	20
Seizure Disorder	1	0	0	1
Undetermined	2	3	0	5
Total	48	93	0	141

Natural Deaths by Gender and Age Group

Disease Process	Sex	<1	1-9	10-19	20-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60-69	70-79	80-89	90-99	>=100	Total
Alcohol Abuse	F	0	0	0	0	0	2	3	2	0	0	0	0	7
Alcohol Abuse	M	0	0	0	0	1	1	5	0	0	0	0	0	7
Alcohol Abuse Total														14
Cardiovascular	F	0	0	0	0	1	2	9	5	3	2	0	0	22
Cardiovascular	M	0	0	0	4	1	2	19	17	10	4	0	0	57
Cardiovascular Total														79
Central Nervous System	F	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
Central Nervous System Total														1
Malignancy	F	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
Malignancy Total														1
Organ Failure	F	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
Organ Failure Total														1
Other	F	5	0	0	1	1	1	2	0	0	0	1	0	11
Other	M	1	2	0	1	2	5	5	3	0	0	0	0	19
Other Total														30
Respiratory	F	0	1	0	0	0	0	4	1	0	1	0	0	7
Respiratory	M	0	1	0	2	3	1	2	1	2	0	0	0	12
Respiratory Total														19
Seizure Disorder	M	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
Seizure Disorder Total														2
Undetermined	F	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	0	3
Undetermined	M	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	1	0	0	0	4
Undetermined Total														7
Grand Total		6	4	0	9	10	14	50	33	17	9	2	0	154

Six of the deaths listed as “other” are attributed to Sudden Unexplained Infant Death. **Sudden unexplained infant death (SUID)** applies to the death of an infant less than one year of age, in which investigation, autopsy, medical history review, and appropriate laboratory testing fails to identify a specific cause of death.

Natural Deaths Autopsied



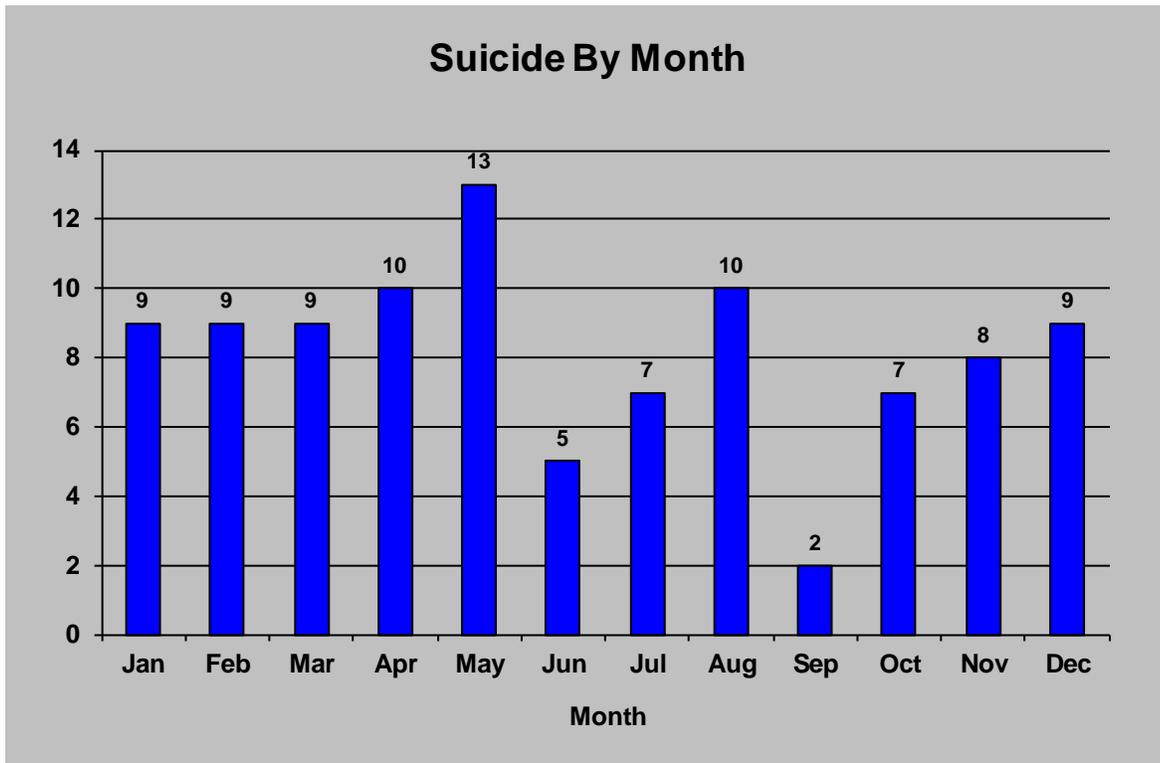
The numbers of cardiovascular deaths reflect the fact that the first symptom of significant heart disease is often a fatal heart attack.

SUICIDE

Suicides are those deaths caused by intentional, self-inflicted injuries. In Spokane County there were (98) suicides in 2014, no increase or decrease from 2013 which was (91).

The highest number (72/91) of suicides fell within the 20-59 age groups. In the United States, suicide numbers were highest in the 45-54 age range, but the rate by gender was highest in males older that 85 (2008 data). Nationally, suicide deaths in older Americans are associated statistically with depression, relationship problems, drug and alcohol abuse, and serious physical health problems. Five suicides occurred in teenagers in Spokane in 2014, and 19 in the 20-29 age group.

Suicide Deaths by Month



Suicide Method by Gender and Age Group

Drowning	F	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Drowning Total														1
Drugs/Poisons	F	0	0	2	2	3	3	5	0	0	0	1	0	16
Drugs/Poisons	M	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	3
Drugs/Poisons Total														19
Firearms	F	0	0	1	1	2	2	2	3	0	0	0	0	11
Firearms	M	0	0	2	5	2	6	7	5	2	5	1	0	35
Firearms Total														46
Hanging	F	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
Hanging	M	0	0	1	3	8	5	4	0	1	0	0	0	22
Hanging Total														23
Jumping	M	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
Jumping Total														2
Other	F	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Other	M	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	2
Hanging Total														3
Plastic Bag	F	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Plastic Bag	M	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	2
Plastic Bag Total														2
Stab/incised wound	F	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	2
Stab/incised wound Total														2
Grand Total		0	0	11	13	16	16	18	10	5	7	2	0	98

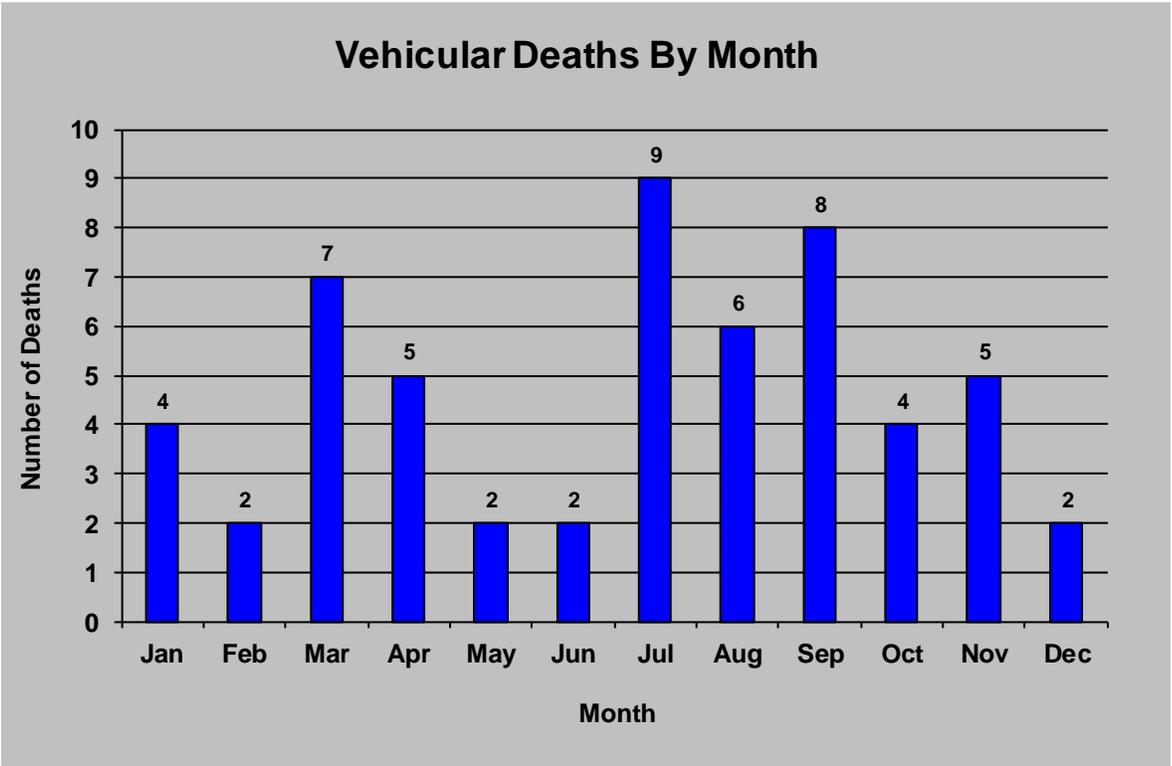
As has been the case in many Medical Examiner years, gunshot wounds remain the most frequent suicide method partly because of the inherent lethality of firearm injuries (55 total). Gunshot wounds are followed by 16 suicidal hanging and 7 intentional overdoses.

VEHICULAR

During the calendar year of 2014, the Medical Examiner’s Office participated in the investigation of (56) deaths categorized as vehicular. There is no increase or decrease from 2013 which also had (36) deaths categorized as vehicular.

In vehicle (automobile and truck, listed as “automobile” on page 38) collisions there were 22 deaths, 20 drivers and 2 passengers. In addition there were 5 deaths among motorcycle operators, with 1 motorcycle passenger death and 5 pedestrian deaths. There is 1 death which has been categorized as other, the death was due to an all-terrain vehicle (ATV) accident. Finally, 2 deaths involved bicyclists.

Vehicular Deaths by Month



Vehicular Deaths by Method, Gender, and Age Group

Vehicular Method Gender and Age Group

Vehicular Method	Sex	<1	1-9	10-19	20-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60-69	70-79	80-89	90-99	>=100	Total
Automobile Driver	F	0	0	0	2	0	1	1	0	2	2	2	0	10
Automobile Driver	M	0	0	2	2	1	1	2	0	1	0	1	0	10
Automobile Driver Total														20
Automobile Passenger	F	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
Automobile Passenger	M	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Automobile Passenger Total														2
Byciclist	M	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
Byciclist Total														2
Motorcycle Driver	M	0	0	0	1	0	0	2	1	1	0	0	0	5
Motorcycle Driver Total														5
Motorcycle Passenger	F	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
Motorcycle Passenger Total														1
Other	M	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Other Total														1
Pedestrian	F	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
Pedestrian	M	0	0	0	0	0	1	3	0	0	0	0	0	4
Pedestrian Total														5
Grand Total		0	0	3	5	1	6	9	1	4	2	5	0	36

Traffic Fatalities and Use of Restraint

Traffic Fatalities and Use of Restraint

Circumstances	Restrained	Unrestrained	Unknown	Total
Automobile Driver	7	6	3	16
Automobile Passenger	2	3	2	7
Unknown	0	0	0	0
Total	9	9	5	23

When traffic accident victims are flown / transported to Spokane for advanced medical care, it becomes more difficult to collect use of restraint information.

UNDETERMINED

“Undetermined” manner is used to designate a death that does not exactly fit the categories natural, suicide, homicide, accident, or overlaps between two categories. An example is a death due to medication overdose. In some such deaths the determination between accident and suicide cannot be made as the decedent’s intent is not clear. Information concerning the circumstances may be lacking because of the absence of background information, or because of a delay between death and discovery of the body. If an extensive investigation and autopsy cannot clarify the circumstances, the death is placed in this category. There were (12) undetermined manner deaths in Spokane County in 2014.

Although the cause of death was established in almost all of these deaths, the manner still could not be established. Again, the reason for undetermined manner is lack of information or conflicting information.

Undetermined Deaths

Manner-Undetermined Deaths 2014

Number	Cause of Death	Month	Sex	Age	Race
1	Drowning	Jan	F	60	Hispanic
2	Intrauterine death- cause unknown	June	F	0	Caucasian
3	Cerebral edema due to contusions of the brain due to blunt impact head injury	June	M	34	Hispanic
4	Smoke Inhalation	June	M	42	Caucasian
5	Undetermined after complete autopsy	June	M	3 months	Caucasian
6	Combined drug toxicity due to simultaneous use of butalbital, codeine and benzodiazepines	Aug	M	59	Caucasian
7	Contact gunshot wound to the chest	Sept	M	84	Caucasian
8	Combined drug toxicity due to simultaneous use of ethanol and amitriptyline	Oct	F	51	Caucasian
9	Hemoperitoneum due to pelvic fractures and lacerations of the liver and spleen due to blunt impact to torso	Oct	M	31	Caucasian
10	Subdural hematoma due to blunt head injury	Oct	F	51	Caucasian
11	Bilateral lobar pneumonia and disseminated fungal infection due to decreased consciousness and mobility due to remote blunt impact to head with skull fracture and contrecoup contusions	Nov	M	58	Caucasian
12	Drowning	Dec	M	66	Caucasian

Glossary of Terms

Prescription Drug	Therapeutic drug or Medicine: A substance, other than food, used in the prevention, diagnosis, alleviation, treatment, or cure of disease.
Illicit drug	A drug used non-medically for personal stimulation/depression/euphoria, use or abuse.
Drug Caused Death	Death directly caused by a drug or drugs in combination with each other, including psychiatric drugs or therapeutic drugs for conditions such as asthma or epilepsy
Jurisdiction	The jurisdiction of the Medical Examiner's Office extends to all reportable deaths occurring within the boundaries of Spokane County, whether or not the incident leading to the death (such as an accident) occurred within the county. Also included are people who are transferred to Spokane area hospitals from surrounding Counties/States, who then expire in Spokane.
Manner	A statistical classification on the death certificate of the way in which the cause of death came about (accident, homicide, suicide, natural, or undetermined).
Manner: Accident	Death other than natural, where there is no evidence of intent, i.e., unintentional. In this report, vehicle accidents are identified separately.
Manner: Homicide	Death due to the acts of another.
Manner: Natural	Death caused solely by organic disease. If natural death is hastened by injury (such as a fall), the manner of death will not be considered natural.
Manner: Suicide	Death as a result of a purposeful action, with intent (explicit or implicit) to end one's life.
Manner: Traffic or Vehicular	Unintentional deaths of drivers (automobile, bicycle or motorcycle), passengers, and pedestrians involving motor vehicles on public roadways. By convention, and at the direction of state vital records, accidents involving motor vehicles on private property (such as driveways) are not included in this category.
Manner: Undetermined	Manner assigned when there is insufficient evidence or information to assign to accident, homicide, suicide, or natural categories, or when two plausible manners are equally likely.
Opiate	A broad class of drugs including morphine, heroin, and synthetic medicines such as methadone.
Poison	Any substance, either taken internally or applied externally, that is injurious to health or dangerous to life.

Race	The racial categories used in this report are: Asian, Black, Caucasian, Hispanic, Native American, Other and Unknown. For public Health purposes, race is included in the Washington State death certificate.
Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS)	Sudden Infant Death Syndrome is defined as the sudden death of an infant less than one year of age that cannot be explained after a thorough investigation is conducted, including complete autopsy, examination of the death scene, and review of clinical history.
Sudden Unexplained Infant Death (SUID)	Applies to the death of an infant less than one year of age, in which (<i>SUID</i>) investigation, autopsy, medical history review, and appropriate laboratory testing fails to identify a specific cause of death. SUID includes cases that meet the definition of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome.

Organizational Chart

Spokane County Medical Examiner's Office

