

## MISSION STATEMENT

*“A regional forensic medicine center striving for continued excellence in providing scientific, compassionate, and professional services in the investigation of unexpected death.”*

## FOREWORD

Information presented in this annual report has been compiled on deaths that came under the jurisdiction of the Spokane County Medical Examiner during the year 2002. This summarized report presents data in a variety of formats with the objective of providing useful information to diverse groups in the community.

### **ACKNOWLEDGMENT...**

*The Medical Examiner’s Office wishes to express, once again, their sincere and deepest appreciation to Bob Roberts, Systems Analyst and Richard Shaw, Senior Computer Programmer of the Spokane County Information Systems Department, for their assistance and support in the development of this statistical report.*

## **INTRODUCTION**

The year 2002 was the fourth year of the new Medical Examiner Death Investigation system in Spokane County. The office made tremendous strides towards accreditation by the National Association of Medical Examiners, and underwent administrative re-organization. The two forensic pathologists, formerly employed by a private pathology group in Spokane, became county employees. Improvements were made in several areas including the handling of personal property and documentation of unidentified remains.

## **CRITERIA FOR REPORTABLE DEATHS**

- 1. Persons who die suddenly when in apparent good health and without medical attendance within 24-36 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 violence whatsoever, whether the primary cause or any contributory factor in the death.**
- 6. Contagious disease.**
- 7. Unclaimed, indigent decedents.**
- 8. Premature and stillborn infants where suspicious circumstances exist.**

## **FUNCTION OF THE MEDICAL EXAMINER'S OFFICE**

The Medical Examiner's Office serves the living by investigating deaths, usually when the deaths are unexpected. This task begins with careful observations and investigation at the scene 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 identifying evidence, defining public health and product safety risks, and providing compassionate services to families.

## **MEDICAL EXAMINER CASES IN 2002**

In 2002, there were 4257 deaths in Spokane County (based on the latest census of 422,400 this represents 1% of the population). Of these deaths, 3095 were reported to the Medical Examiner by medical and law enforcement personnel. Based on analysis of the scene and circumstances of death, and the decedent's medical history, the Medical Examiner assumed jurisdiction in 633 (20%) of these reported deaths.

There were 2462 deaths reported to the Medical Examiner in which jurisdiction was not assumed. The number of deaths reported to the Medical Examiner's Office was significantly greater than recorded during the years as a coroner's system (before January 1, 1999). The number has also steadily increased during the Medical Examiners year's (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.

Category Number of Deaths Percent of Total

Cases By Manner Of Death

Accident (A)	207	32.70%
Homicide (H)	29	4.58%
Natural (N)	262	41.39%
Suicide (S)	66	10.43%
Undetermined (U)	15	2.37%
Vehicular (V)	54	8.53%

Total Deaths in Spokane County 4,257

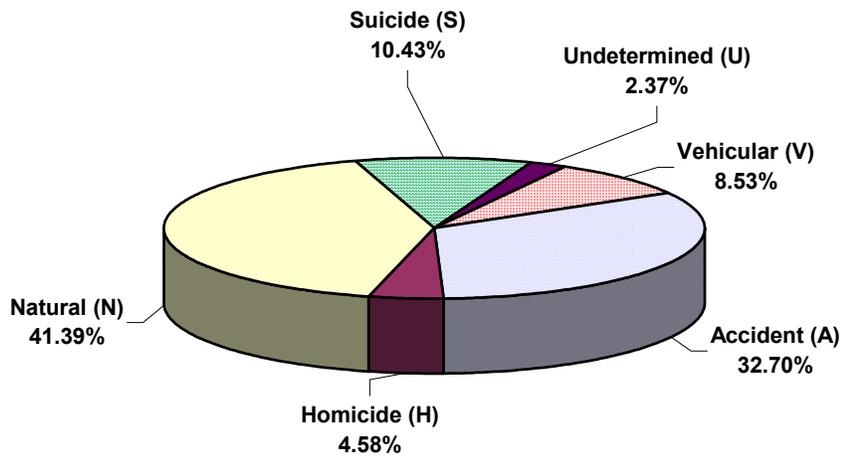
Total Deaths Reported to Medical Examiner 2002 3,095

Total Non-jurisdictional Cases 2,462

Total Spokane County Medical Examiner 633

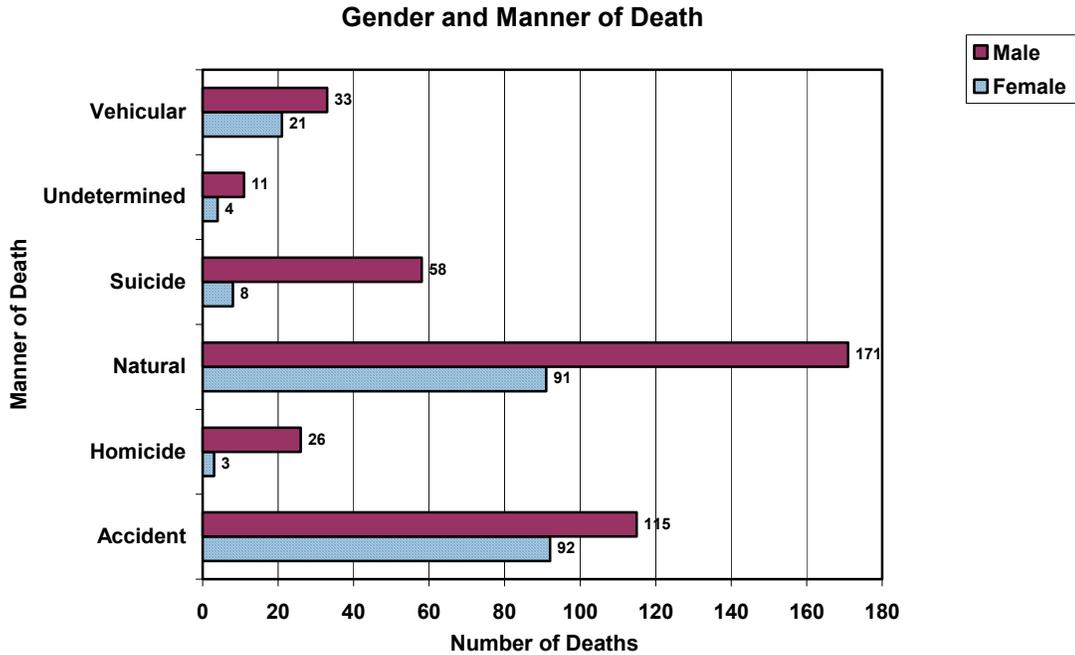
Total Autopsies Performed 442

Spokane County Medical Examiner's Cases



### Gender and Manner of Death

Sex	Total	A	H	N	S	U	V	Percent
Female	219	92	3	91	8	4	21	34.60%
Male	414	115	26	171	58	11	33	65.40%
<b>Total</b>	<b>633</b>	<b>207</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>262</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>54</b>	



### Race and Manner of Death

<b>Race</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>H</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>S</b>	<b>U</b>	<b>V</b>
Asian	3	1					2
Black	16	2	3	5		1	5
Caucasian	585	196	24	248	64	12	41
Hispanic	9	4	1	1			3
Native American	11	2	1	3	1	1	3
Other	1			1			
Unknown	8	2		4	1	1	
<b>Total</b>	<b>633</b>	<b>207</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>262</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>54</b>

### Age and Manner of Death

<b>Age Group (Years)</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>H</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>S</b>	<b>U</b>	<b>V</b>
<b>0 to 9</b>	27	5	4	13	0	1	4
<b>10 to 19</b>	16	2	3	1	3	0	7
<b>20 to 29</b>	41	9	7	6	11	2	6
<b>30 to 39</b>	61	17	5	18	12	3	6
<b>40 to 49</b>	109	34	5	44	18	3	5
<b>50 to 59</b>	92	12	2	55	10	3	10
<b>60 to 69</b>	66	12	2	41	6	0	5
<b>70 to 79</b>	85	38	1	34	1	3	8
<b>80 to 89</b>	87	44	0	36	5	0	2
<b>90 to 99</b>	47	32	0	14	0	0	1
<b>100 to 109</b>	2	2	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>633</b>	<b>207</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>262</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>54</b>

**Gender and Age Group**

<b>Age Group (Years)</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Unknown</b>
0 to 9	27	10	17	0
10 to 19	16	7	9	0
20 to 29	41	7	34	0
30 to 39	61	16	45	0
40 to 49	109	27	82	0
50 to 59	92	21	71	0
60 to 69	66	20	45	1
70 to 79	85	32	53	0
80 to 89	87	53	34	0
90 to 99	47	25	22	0
100 to 109	2	1	1	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>633</b>	<b>219</b>	<b>413</b>	<b>1</b>

**CHAPLAINCY PROGRAM**

The Medical Examiner, according to State law, is responsible for identifying decedents and for locating and notifying next-of-kin. The Medical Examiner's Office is fortunate to have the assistance of the Chaplains from the Spokane Police Department and Spokane County Sheriff's Office in this difficult task. 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.

## MULTI-YEAR COMPARISON

The Medical Examiner's Office replaced the coroner's system on January 1, 1999. As noted in the "Comparison of Manners of Death" table below, the Medical Examiner has assumed jurisdiction twice as often as the coroner. Although comparing the coroner and medical examiner systems through the years reveals similar numbers of homicides, undetermined and vehicular deaths, the medical examiner system has historically assumed jurisdiction in more "accident" and "natural" deaths than the coroner. Part of the increase in the accident category is accounted for by improved reporting to the medical examiner system which tends to identify some types of accidents such as fractures in elderly people. The medical examiner system also performed significantly increased numbers of autopsies which tends to identify deaths due to medications and drugs, probably missed in the coroner's system. It is believed that the increased number of natural deaths (50-100 per year) identified by the medical examiner system reflects better scene investigations and a strict adherence to State RCW that requires the Medical Examiner's involvement when death is unexpected, and occurring in a younger age group.

In 2002 the number of homicides was greater than any year since 1997, accounting for a total of 29 deaths in 2002 compared to 15 in 2001. A trend in 2001 and 2002 showed an increase in the absolute number of suicides, to 68 and 66 respectively as compared to suicide numbers ranging from 54 to 59 in previous years. This may be accounted for by increased recognition of suicide in the medical examiner system, and parenthetically the Medical Examiner staff attributes some of the increases to the events of September 11, 2001, and to the economic downturn.

It is also noted that undetermined manners of death have increased over the coroner years, likewise reflecting better investigation and an increased number of autopsies and an understanding because of these factors that some deaths truly belong in the undetermined classification. In 2001 and 2002 the numbers of "undetermined" cases is consistent with other medical examiner systems nationwide.

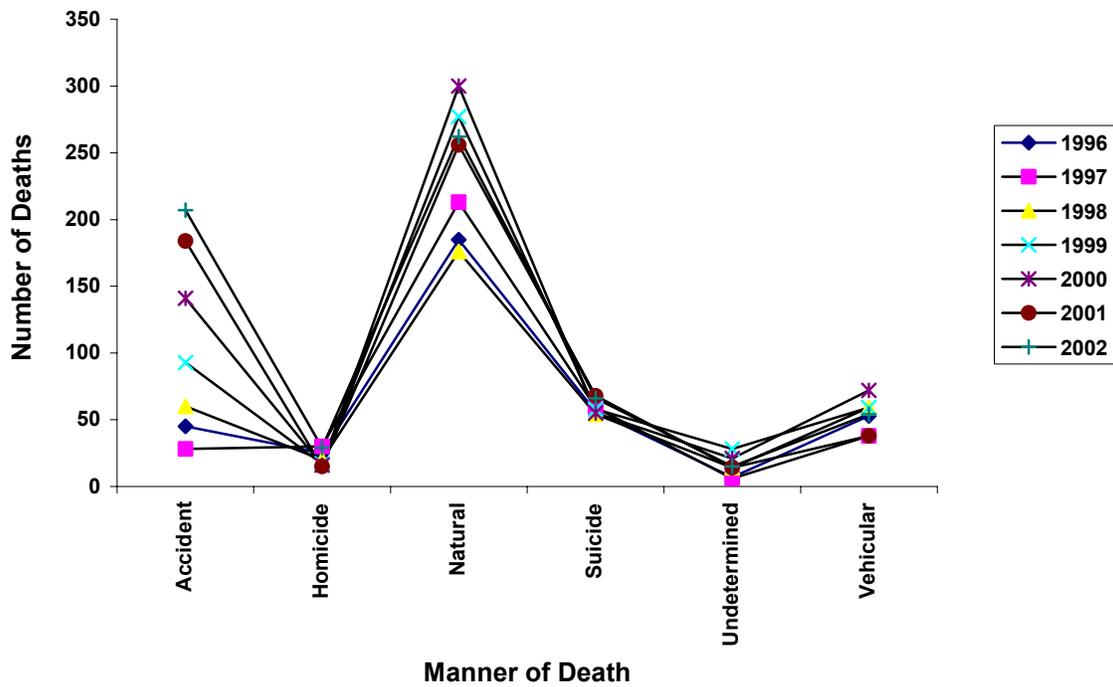
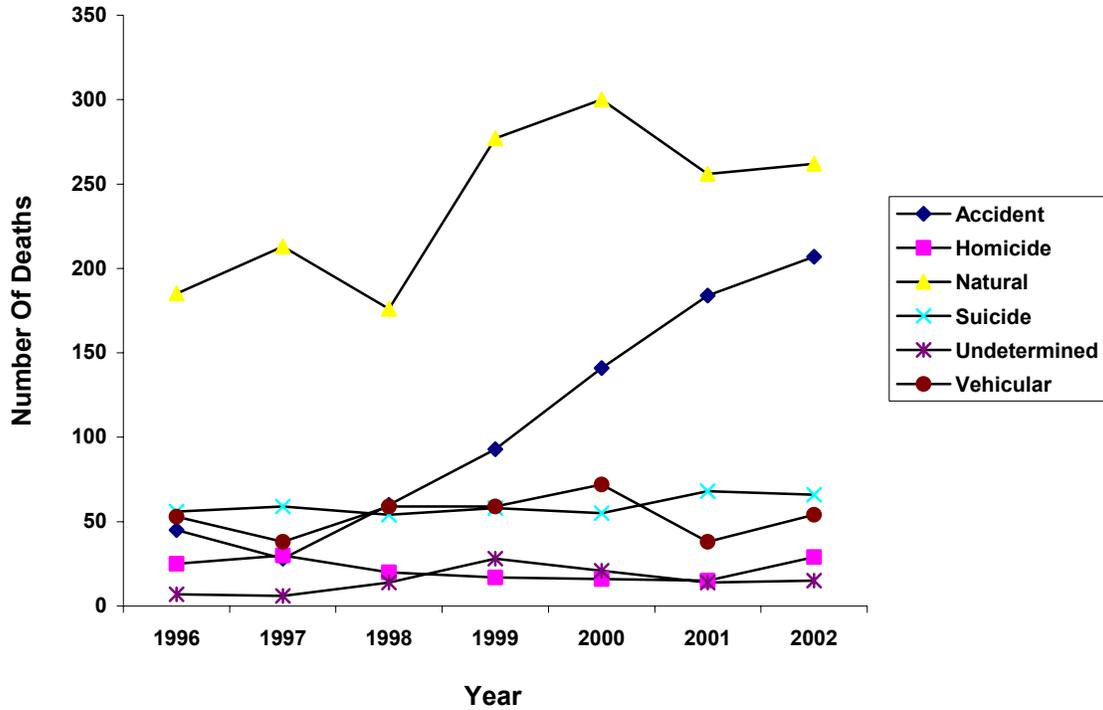
**Comparison of Manners of Death 1996 - 2002**

<b>Manner of Death</b>	<b>1996</b>	<b>1997</b>	<b>1998</b>	<b>1999</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>2001</b>	<b>2002</b>
Accident	45	28	60	93	141	184	207
Homicide	25	30	20	17	16	15	29
Natural	185	213	176	277	300	256	262
Suicide	56	59	54	58	55	68	66
Undetermined	7	6	14	28	21	14	15
Vehicular	53	38	59	59	72	38	54
<b>Total</b>	<b>371</b>	<b>374</b>	<b>383</b>	<b>532</b>	<b>605</b>	<b>575</b>	<b>633</b>

**Comparison of Manners of Death as Percentage of  
Total Annual Medical Examiner's Cases 1996 - 2002**

<b>Manner of Death</b>	<b>1996</b>	<b>1997</b>	<b>1998</b>	<b>1999</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>2001</b>	<b>2002</b>
Accident	12.13%	7.49%	15.67%	17.48%	23.31%	32.00%	32.70%
Homicide	6.74%	8.02%	5.22%	3.20%	2.64%	2.61%	4.58%
Natural	49.87%	56.95%	45.95%	52.07%	49.59%	44.52%	41.39%
Suicide	15.09%	15.78%	14.10%	10.90%	9.09%	11.83%	10.43%
Undetermined	1.89%	1.60%	3.66%	5.26%	3.47%	2.43%	2.37%
Vehicular	14.29%	10.16%	15.40%	11.09%	11.90%	6.61%	8.53%

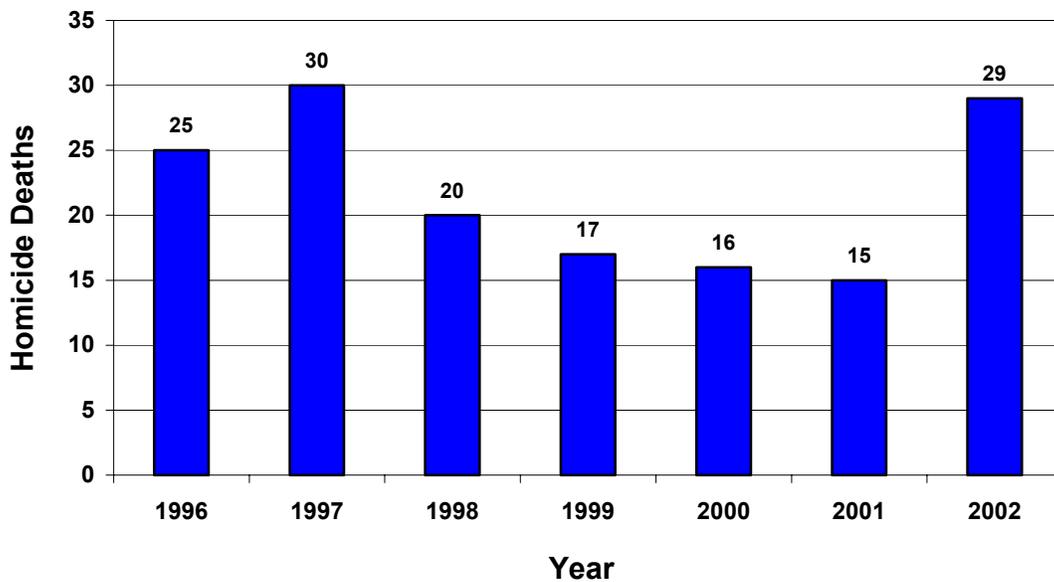
### Comparison of Manners of Death 1996 - 2002



### Comparison of Homicidal Methods 1996 - 2002

Method Used	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002
Asphyxia	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
Blunt Impact	3	2	1	3	0	1	6
Child Abuse	0	2	1	1	2	1	2
Firearms	14	21	8	6	9	7	16
Homicidal Violence	1	3	2	2	3	2	1
Other	0	0	0	2	0	0	2
Stabbing	6	2	7	2	2	3	2
Strangulation	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
Undetermined	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Unknown	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>29</b>

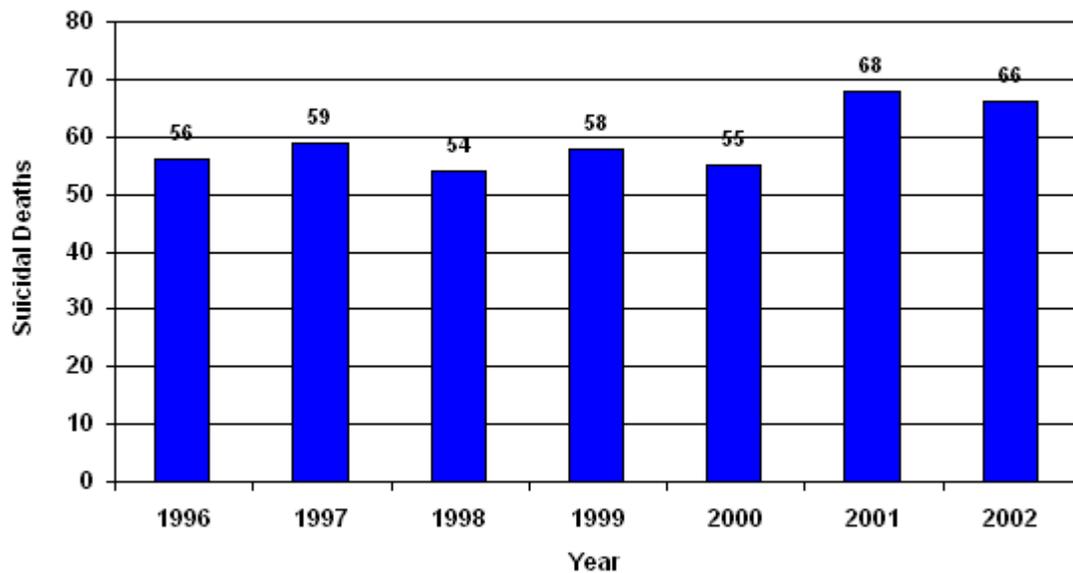
### Homicides 1996 - 2002



### Comparison of Suicidal Methods 1996 - 2002

Method Used	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002
Carbon Monoxide	6	8	5	4	6	4	3
Drowning	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
Drugs/Poisons	4	6	3	10	3	12	9
Firearms	34	33	29	29	33	37	41
Hanging	5	9	10	9	10	12	9
Jumping	1	0	4	2	1	1	0
Other	3	3	0	0	1	0	2
Plastic Bag	3	0	1	2	0	0	1
Stab/incised wound	0	0	2	2	1	1	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>66</b>

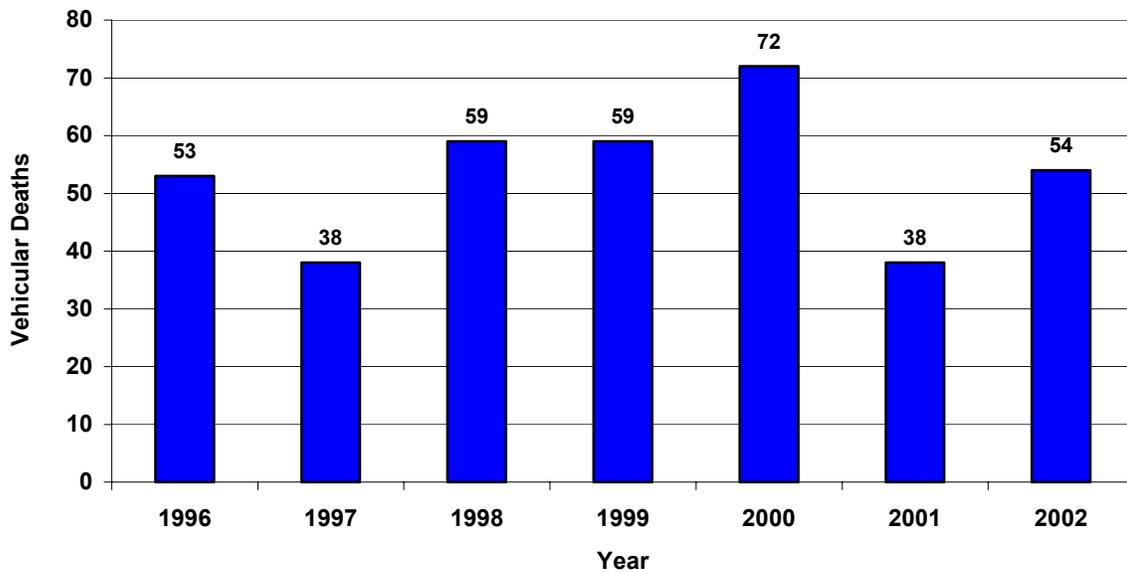
### Suicides 1996 - 2002



### Comparison of Vehicular Deaths 1996 - 2002

Vehicle Circumstances	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002
Automobile Driver	25	22	32	28	37	20	26
Automobile Passenger	17	8	15	18	16	8	13
Bicyclist	1	2	1	1	1	0	0
Motorcycle Driver	2	3	2	3	3	0	4
Motorcycle Passenger	1	1	0	0	2	0	0
Other	3	1	4	1	2	2	2
Pedestrian	4	1	3	7	10	7	9
Unknown	0	0	2	1	1	1	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>54</b>

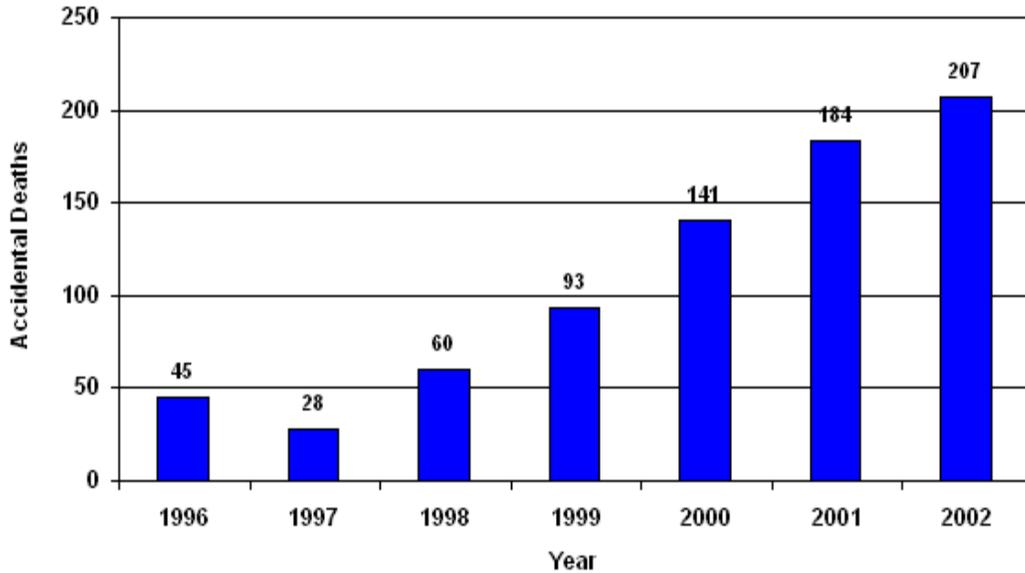
### Vehicular Deaths 1996 - 2002



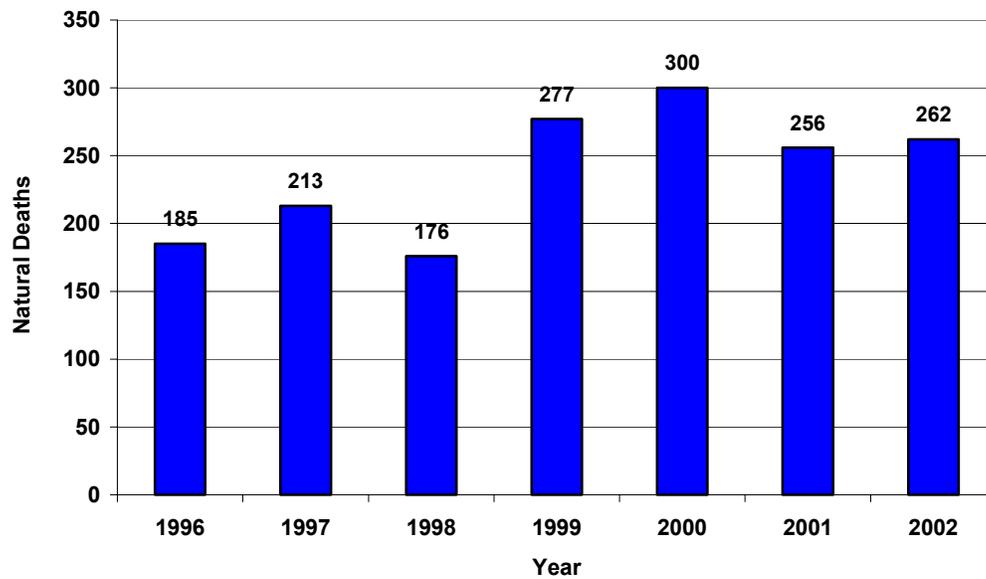
### Comparison of Accidental Deaths 1996 - 2002

Accident Circumstances	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002
Aircraft	5	0	1	0	0	3	0
Alcohol Abuse	0	0	0	0	0	1	2
Anaphylaxis	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
Asphyxiation	4	1	2	6	4	5	9
Aspiration	1	0	0	3	1	4	0
Bicycle Fall	0	0	1	0	0	1	0
Boating	1	0	0	1	2	0	1
Choking	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
Dog Bite	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
Drowning	5	4	7	4	6	5	13
Drugs	1	1	1	15	30	45	49
Electrocution	2	0	1	0	0	1	0
Fall	7	10	31	43	80	98	114
Farm	2	0	1	2	0	0	0
Fire/burns	5	4	4	1	3	2	4
Firearms	0	2	2	1	0	0	0
Hyperthermia	0	0	0	0	1	2	0
Hypothermia	4	0	0	0	4	1	2
Industrial Accident	4	3	2	2	1	3	3
Lightening Strike	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Motorcycle Driver (race track)	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
Other	2	3	7	5	9	7	6
Prescribed Drugs	1	0	0	5	0	0	0
Struck by Object	0	0	0	2	0	1	0
Surgical Procedure	0	0	0	3	0	1	2
Therapy Complication	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>93</b>	<b>141</b>	<b>184</b>	<b>207</b>

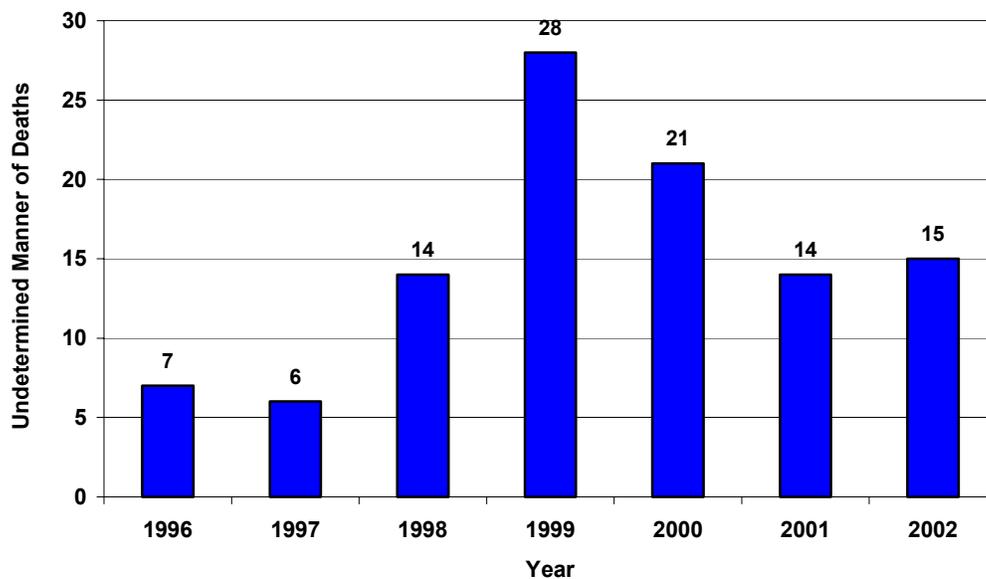
### Accidental Deaths 1996 - 2002



### Natural Deaths 1996 - 2002



### Deaths of Undetermined Manner 1996 - 2002

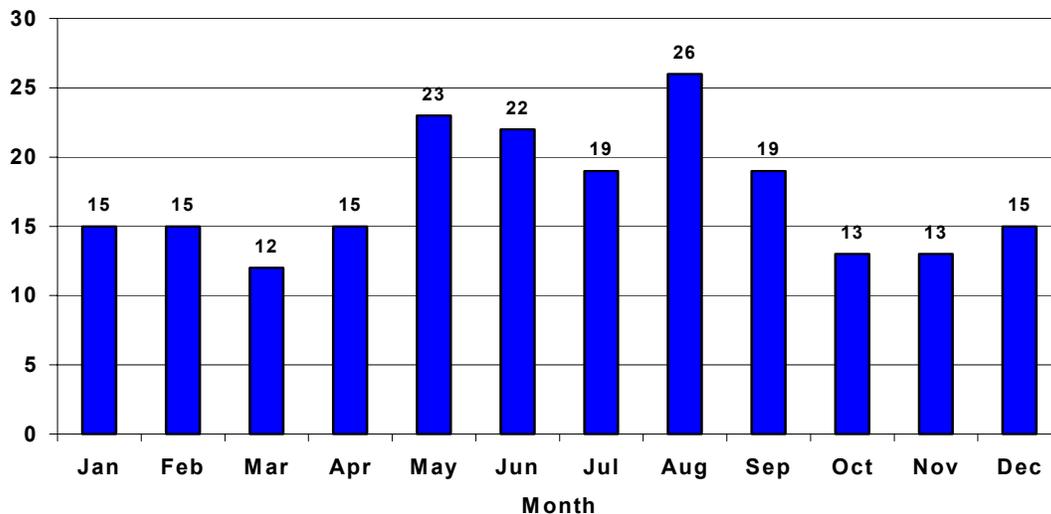


**MANNER: ACCIDENT**

Accidental deaths in 2002 showed a significant increase in the number of drownings. As was mentioned previously, the increased numbers of deaths since statistical records were recorded in 1996 are due to falls and medications. The increase in fall-related deaths is partially the result of identifying fractures in senior citizens which result in death because of their frail health. The medical examiner system has increasingly been able to identify accidental deaths related to drug or medication overdoses, particularly when compared to the coroner's system.

Traffic-related fatalities are separated from other accidents because some community groups have special need of examining traffic-related deaths.

**Accidental Deaths By Month**



**Accident Mode By Gender**

<b>Accident Mode</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Male</b>
Alcohol Abuse	2	0	2
Asphyxiation	9	4	5
Boating	1	0	1
Drowning	13	3	10
Drugs	49	17	32
Fall	114	61	53
Fire/burns	4	2	2
Hypothermia	2	0	2
Industrial Accident	3	0	3
Other	6	2	4
Surgical Procedure	2	1	1
Therapy Complication	2	2	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>207</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>115</b>

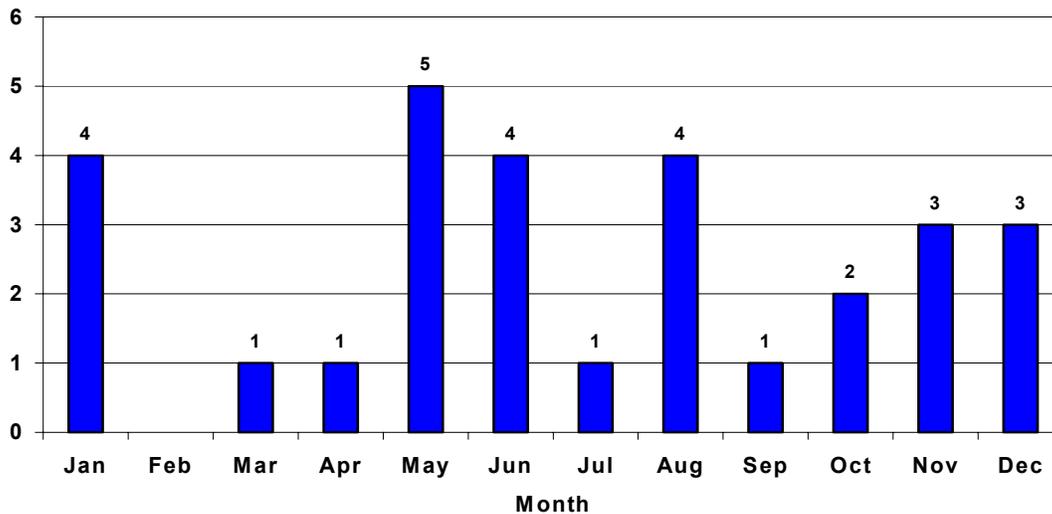
### Accident Mode, Gender and Age Group

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	M	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	2
<b>Alcohol Abuse Total</b>														<b>2</b>
Asphyxiation	F	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	4
Asphyxiation	M	1	0	0	0	2	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	5
<b>Asphyxiation Total</b>														<b>9</b>
Boating	M	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
<b>Boating Total</b>														<b>1</b>
Drowning	F	0	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3
Drowning	M	0	1	1	2	1	1	1	1	2	0	0	0	10
<b>Drowning Total</b>														<b>13</b>
Drugs	F	0	1	0	1	4	8	2	1	0	0	0	0	17
Drugs	M	0	0	0	4	7	18	3	0	0	0	0	0	32
<b>Drugs Total</b>														<b>49</b>
Fall	F	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	3	13	27	16	1	61
Fall	M	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	4	17	13	15	1	53
<b>Fall Total</b>														<b>114</b>
Fire/burns	F	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	2
Fire/burns	M	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	2
<b>Fire/burns Total</b>														<b>4</b>
Hypothermia	M	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	2
<b>Hypothermia Total</b>														<b>2</b>
Industrial Accident	M	0	0	0	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	3
<b>Industrial Accident Total</b>														<b>3</b>
Other	F	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	2
Other	M	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	1	1	0	0	4
<b>Other Total</b>														<b>6</b>
Surgical Procedure	F	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
Surgical Procedure	M	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
<b>Surgical Procedure Total</b>														<b>2</b>
Therapy Complicatio	F	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	2
<b>Therapy Complication Total</b>														<b>2</b>
<b>Total Accidents</b>		<b>1</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>207</b>

**MANNER: HOMICIDE**

In 2002 the recorded 29 homicides nearly equaled those reported in the year 1997, and was the second highest incidence of homicide in the last seven years. As is true nationally, the vast majority of these homicides were the result of firearms. However, the incidence of homicide via blunt impact or force injury was significantly increased over any recent year. Firearms also accounted for the majority of deaths by suicide. The most frequent age group in 2002 of homicide victims was 20-29 years.

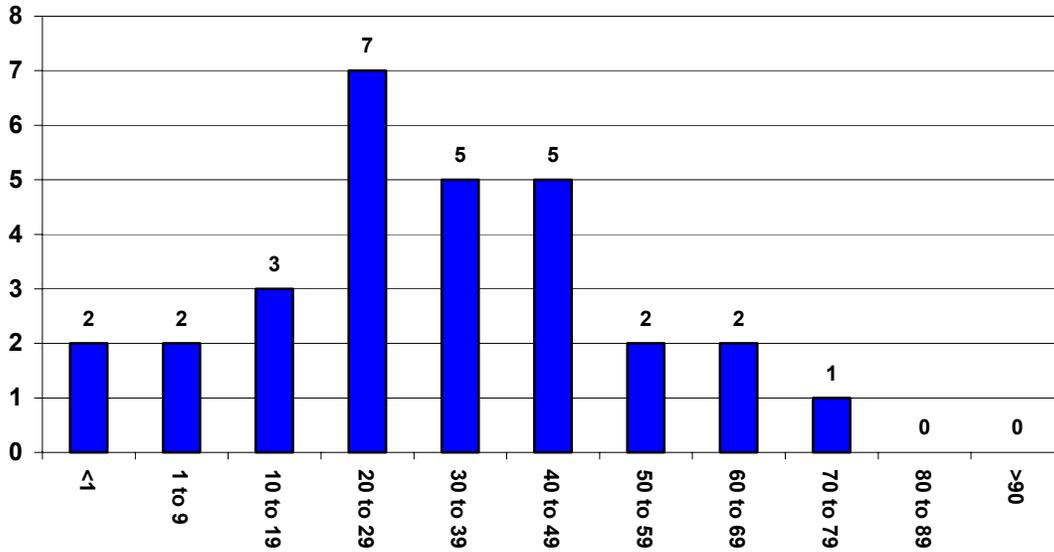
**Homicide Deaths By Month**



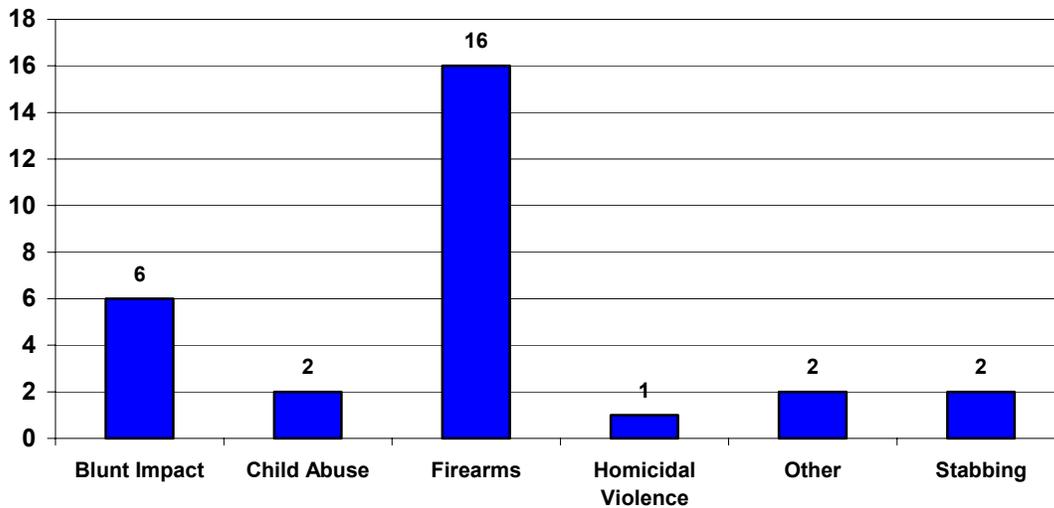
### Homicide Mode, Gender and Age Group

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
Blunt Impact	F	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
Blunt Impact	M	0	1	0	0	0	2	0	1	0	0	0	0	4
<b>Blunt Impact Total</b>														<b>6</b>
Child Abuse	F	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Child Abuse	M	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
<b>Child Abuse Total</b>														<b>2</b>
Firearms	M	0	0	1	5	4	2	2	1	1	0	0	0	16
<b>Firearms Total</b>														<b>16</b>
Homicidal Violence	M	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
<b>Homicidal Violence Total</b>														<b>1</b>
Other	M	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
<b>Other Total</b>														<b>2</b>
Stabbing	M	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
<b>Stabbing Total</b>														<b>2</b>
<b>Total Homicides</b>		<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>29</b>

### Homicide Deaths By Age Group



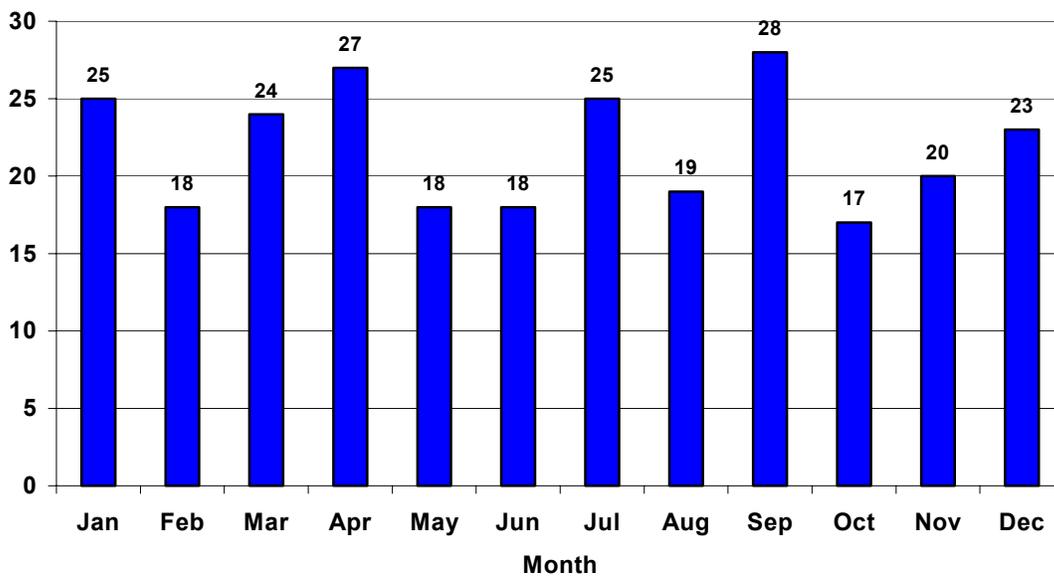
### Homicide Deaths By Method



MANNER: 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



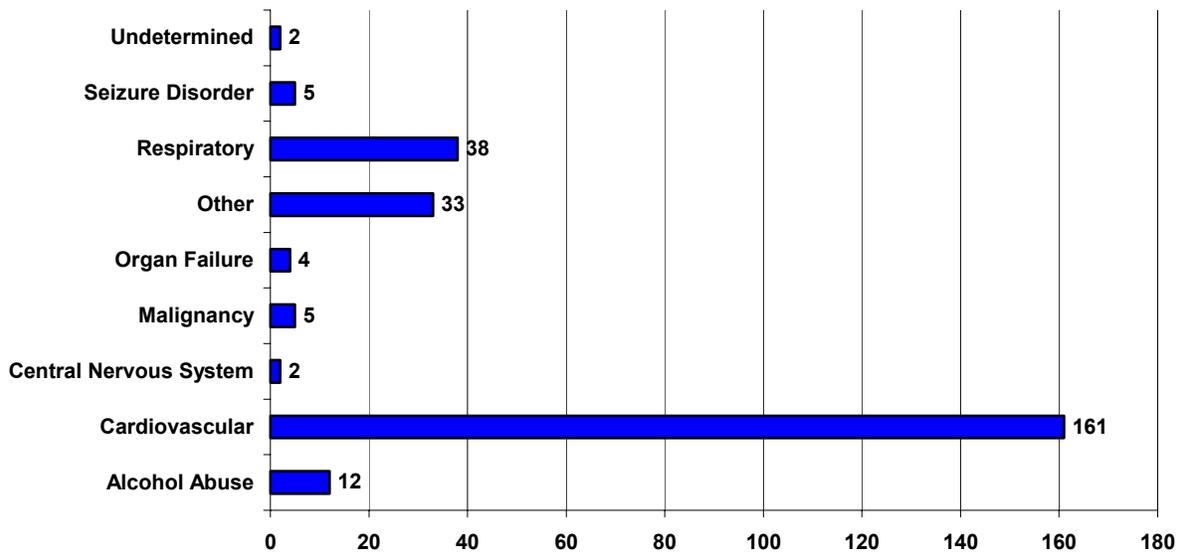
## Natural Deaths by Disease Process

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	CNV	M	OF	O	R	SD	U	TOTAL
Acute Myocardial Infarct		1								1
Arrhythmia		2								2
Aspiration of Gastric Contents						1				1
Asthma							4			4
Atherosclerotic Cardiovascular Disease		121								121
Brain Tumor				1						1
Cardiac Dysrhythmia		1								1
Cardiac Tamponade		4								4
Cardiomyopathy		17								17
Cerebral Hemorrhage						1				1
Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease							7			7
Cirrhosis of the Liver	8				3					11
CNS Lymphoma				2						2
Congestive heart failure		5								5
Coronary Thrombosis		1								1
Diabetes Mellitus						2				2
End Stage Renal Disease					1					1
Epilepsy								4		4
From History								1		1
Gastro Intestinal Bleed	4									4
Gastrointestinal Bleed						4				4
Hypertensive heart disease		3								3
Myocardial Infarction		2								2
Other		1		2		6	1			10
Pancreatitis						1				1
Peritonitis						2				2
Pneumonia							21			21
Pulmonary embolism							5			5
Seizure Disorder						2				2
Septicemia						2				2
SIDS						10				10
Subarachnoid Hemorrhage			2			2				4
undetermined									2	2
Valvular Heart Disease		3								3
<b>Total</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>161</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>262</b>

### Natural Deaths by Category



### Disease Process By Gender

Disease Process	Female	Male	Total
Alcohol Abuse	2	10	12
Cardiovascular	57	104	161
Central Nervous System	0	2	2
Malignancy	1	4	5
Organ Failure	0	4	4
Other	13	20	33
Respiratory	17	21	38
Seizure Disorder	0	5	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>91</b>	<b>171</b>	<b>262</b>

### Natural Death Gender and Age Group

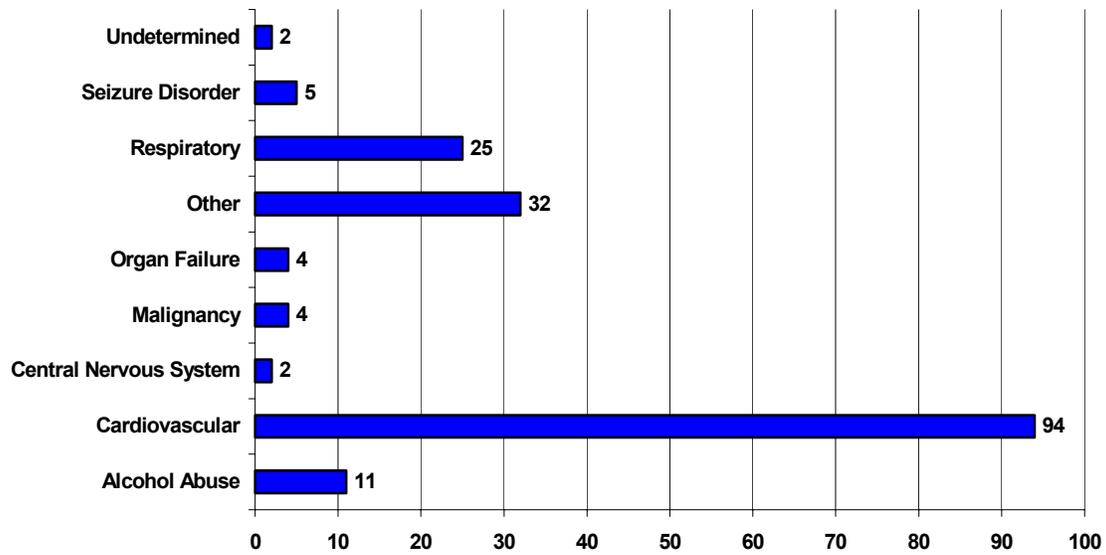
Disease Process	Sex	<1	1-9	10-19	20-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60-69	70-79	80-89	90-99	>=100	Total
Alcohol Abuse	F	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	2
Alcohol Abuse	M	0	0	0	0	1	1	6	2	0	0	0	0	10
<b>Alcohol Abuse Total</b>														<b>12</b>
Cardiovascular	F	0	0	0	1	2	6	7	8	11	15	7	0	57
Cardiovascular	M	0	0	0	2	5	17	22	21	19	13	5	0	104
<b>Cardiovascular Total</b>														<b>161</b>
Central Nervous System	M	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	2
<b>Central Nervous System Total</b>														<b>2</b>
Malignancy	F	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
Malignancy	M	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	1	0	4
<b>Malignancy Total</b>														<b>5</b>
Organ Failure	M	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	2	0	0	0	0	4
<b>Organ Failure Total</b>														<b>4</b>
Other	F	2	1	1	0	0	4	1	1	0	3	0	0	13
Other	M	7	2	0	0	1	8	2	0	0	0	0	0	20
<b>Other Total</b>														<b>33</b>
Respiratory	F	0	0	0	2	3	3	1	3	1	4	0	0	17
Respiratory	M	0	0	0	1	4	4	5	2	3	1	1	0	21
<b>Respiratory Total</b>														<b>38</b>
Seizure Disorder	M	0	1	0	0	2	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	5
<b>Seizure Disorder Total</b>														<b>5</b>
Undetermined	F	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
Undetermined	M	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
<b>Undetermined Total</b>														<b>2</b>
<b>Total</b>		<b>9</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>262</b>

## Disease Process in Autopsied Deaths

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

	AA	C	CNV	M	OF	O	R	SD	U	TOTAL
Acute Myocardial Infarct	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Arrhythmia	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
Aspiration of Gastric Contents	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
Asthma	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	3
Atherosclerotic Cardiovascular Disease	0	61	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	61
Cardiac Dysrhythmia	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Cardiac Tamponade	0	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4
Cardiomyopathy	0	15	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	15
Cerebral Hemorrhage	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	2
Cirrhosis of the Liver	7	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	10
CNS Lymphoma	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	2
Congestive heart failure	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
Coronary Thrombosis	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Diabetes Mellitus	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	2
End Stage Renal Disease	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
Epilepsy	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	0	4
From History	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
Gastro Intestinal Bleed	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4
Gastrointestinal Bleed	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	3
Hypertensive heart disease	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3
Myocardial Infarction	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Other	0	1	0	2	0	6	1	0	0	10
Pancreatitis	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
Peritonitis	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	2
Pneumonia	0	0	0	0	0	0	14	0	0	14
Pulmonary embolism	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	0	0	5
Seizure Disorder	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	2
Septicemia	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	2
SIDS	0	0	0	0	0	10	0	0	0	10
Subarachnoid Hemorrhage	0	0	2	0	0	2	0	0	0	4
undetermined	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	2
Valvular Heart Disease	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>94</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>179</b>

### Natural Deaths Autopsied

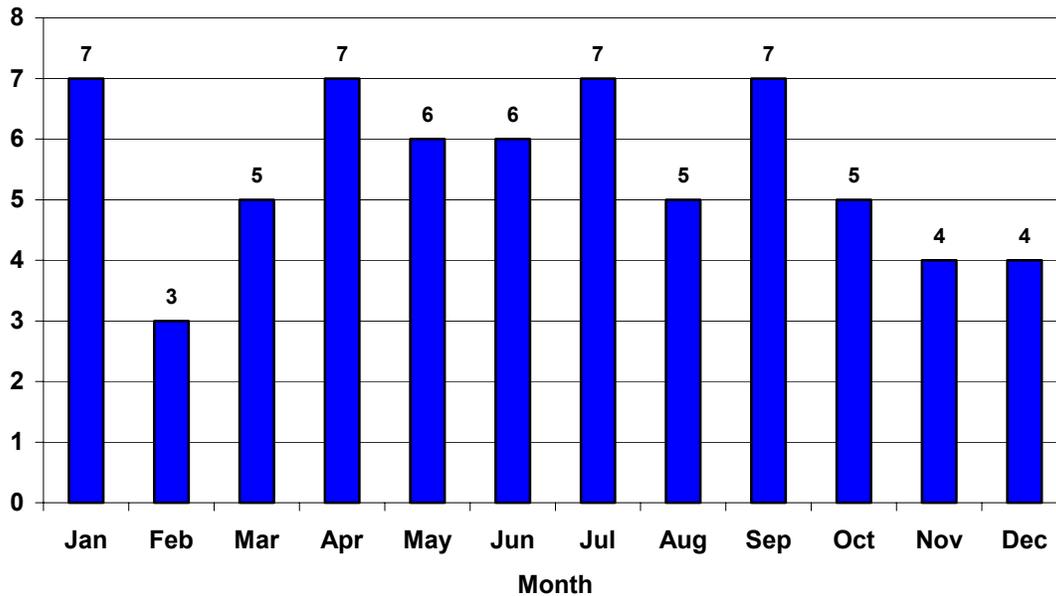


**MANNER: SUICIDE**

Suicides are those deaths caused by intentional, self-inflicted injuries. In Spokane County there were (66) suicides in 2002, down (2) from 2001.

The highest concentration (70%) of all suicides fell within the 30-60 age group. However, looking at suicides in persons (50) years and older, in 2002 this age group represented 33% (22/66) of all suicides occurring in Spokane County.

**Suicide By Month**



### Suicide Method Gender and Age Group

Suicide 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
Carbon Monoxide	M	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	3
<b>Carbon Monoxide Total</b>														
														<b>3</b>
Drugs/Poisons	F	0	0	0	0	3	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	4
Drugs/Poisons	M	0	0	0	1	2	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	5
<b>Drugs/Poisons Total</b>														
														<b>9</b>
Firearms	F	0	0	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	3
Firearms	M	0	0	1	6	2	11	7	4	1	5	0	0	37
Firearms	U	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
<b>Firearms Total</b>														
														<b>41</b>
Hanging	F	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Hanging	M	0	0	1	2	2	2	0	1	0	0	0	0	8
<b>Hanging Total</b>														
														<b>9</b>
Other	M	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
<b>Other Total</b>														
														<b>2</b>
Plastic Bag	M	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
<b>Plastic Bag Total</b>														
														<b>1</b>
Stab/incised wound	M	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
<b>Stab/incised wound Total</b>														
														<b>1</b>
<b>Total</b>		<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>66</b>

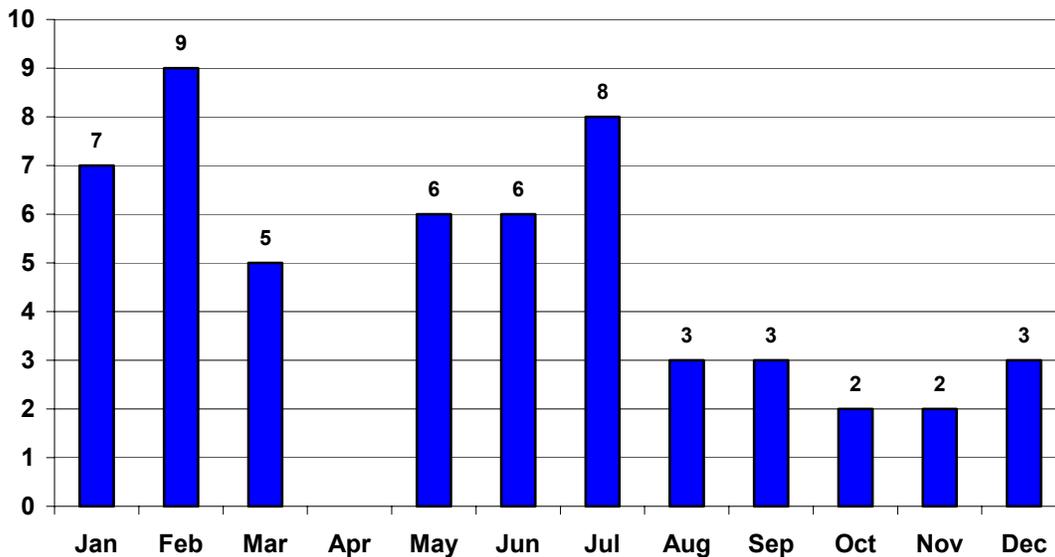
**MANNER: TRAFFIC**

During the calendar year of 2002, the Medical Examiner’s Office participated in the investigation of (54) deaths categorized as vehicular. This represents more than a 42% increase over 2001. The number of deaths where the victim was the driver is (26) and (13) deaths occurred where the decedent was a passenger.

Statistics regarding traffic fatalities and the use of restraint showed that (15) victims were restrained, (16) were unrestrained and (8) of these fatalities, it was not known if restraints were used or not.

In many cases someone other than the person who died may have been under the influence of alcohol and directly involved in the accident.

**Vehicular Deaths By Month**



### Vehicular Method Gender and Age Group

Suicide 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	2	0	1	1	2	1	0	1	0	0	8
Automobile Driver	M	0	0	2	3	3	1	3	2	4	0	0	0	18
<b>Automobile Driver Total</b>														<b>26</b>
Automobile Passenger	F	0	2	2	0	2	0	1	0	2	0	0	0	9
Automobile Passenger	M	0	0	0	1	0	2	0	0	1	0	0	0	4
<b>Automobile Passenger Total</b>														<b>13</b>
Motorcycle Driver	M	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	4
<b>Motorcycle Driver Total</b>														<b>4</b>
Other	M	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
<b>Other Total</b>														<b>2</b>
Pedestrian	F	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	1	0	4
Pedestrian	M	0	0	0	0	0	1	3	0	1	0	0	0	5
<b>Pedestrian Total</b>														<b>9</b>
<b>Total</b>		<b>1</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>54</b>

### Traffic Fatalities and Use of Restraint

Circumstances	Total	Restrained	Unrestrained	Unknown
Automobile Driver	26	11	8	7
Automobile Passenger	13	4	8	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>8</b>

**MANNER: UNDETERMINED**

Deaths are certified as “undetermined” when serious doubt exists as to the true manner of death. Rather than to give an inappropriate opinion, the death is listed as “undetermined”. 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 (15) undetermined deaths in Spokane County in 2002.

**Undetermined**

<b>Number</b>	<b>Cause of Death</b>	<b>Month</b>	<b>Sex</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Race</b>
1	acute intox/comb effects mult meds	Mar	F	51	Caucasian
2	acute intox	Mar	M	43	Caucasian
3	acute intox/comb effects mult meds	May	M	25	Caucasian
4	severe hypoxic encephalopathy	Jun	M	41	Native American
5	undetermined	Jun	M	36	Black
6	undetermined after comp autopsy	Jun	F	75	Caucasian
7	basilar skull fx/contusions brain/blt imp head	Jun	F	75	Caucasian
8	undetermined after complete autopsy	Jul	M	35	Caucasian
9	undetermined after complete autopsy	Jul	M	52	Caucasian
10	undetermined	Aug	M	35	Unknown
11	bronchopneumonia/blt imp head	Sep	M	70	Caucasian
12	acute methadone intox	Sep	M	28	Caucasian
13	prob hypothermia	Oct	F	50	Caucasian
14	asphyxia/inhal products of combustion	Nov	M	43	Caucasian
15	undetermined	Dec	M	4 mo	Caucasian

## GLOSSARY OF TERMS

<b>Blood Alcohol Level</b>	The concentration of ethanol (alcohol) found in blood following ingestion. Measured in grams per 100 ml of blood or grams %. In the State of Washington, 0.08 grams % is considered the legally intoxicated level while driving.
<b>Drug</b>	Therapeutic drug: A substance, other than food, used in the prevention, diagnosis, alleviation, treatment, or cure of disease. Recreational drug: A drug used non-medically for personal stimulation/depression/euphoria, use or abuse.
<b>Drug Caused Death</b>	Death directly caused by a drug or drugs in combination with each other or with alcohol, including psycholeptic drugs or therapeutic drugs like for asthma or epilepsy
<b>Jurisdiction</b>	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.
<b>Manner</b>	A classification of the way in which the cause of death came about, with special reference to social relationships and personal causation. It is the way in which the cause of death came about, whether by force of natural events, by accidental or suicidal self-infliction or by other external forces, determined by others or from risk factors controlled by others.
<b>Manner: Accident</b>	Death other than natural, where there is no evidence of intent, i.e., unintentional. In this report, vehicle accidents are identified separately.
<b>Manner: Homicide</b>	Death resulting from intentional harm (explicit or implicit) of one person by another, including actions of grossly reckless behavior or lack of control of risk factors.
<b>Manner: Natural</b>	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.
<b>Manner: Suicide</b>	Death as a result of a purposeful action, with intent (explicit or implicit) to end one's life.
<b>Manner: Traffic</b>	Unintentional deaths of drivers (automobile, bicycle or motorcycle), passengers, and pedestrians involving motor vehicles on public roadways. Accidents involving motor vehicles on private property (such as driveways) are not included in this category.
<b>Manner: Undetermined</b>	Manner assigned when there is insufficient evidence or information to assign a specific manner.

<b>Opiate</b>	Any preparation or derivative of opium, usually heroin and morphine.
<b>Poison</b>	Any substance, either taken internally or applied externally, that is injurious to health or dangerous to life, and with no medical benefit.
<b>Prenatal/Fetal Death</b>	Category of deaths that occur within the uterus (fetal) or shortly before, during, or shortly after birth (prenatal).
<b>Race</b>	The racial categories used in this report are: Caucasian, Black, Native American, Asian, Hispanic, and Other.

# Spokane County Medical Examiner's Office

