

**WHATCOM COUNTY MEDICAL EXAMINER
1500 NORTH STATE STREET
BELLINGHAM, WA 98225**

2013 ANNUAL REPORT

During 2013 the Whatcom County Medical Examiner's office assumed jurisdiction in 114 death investigations that involved forensic autopsies, toxicological examinations, viewing and summary reporting. In addition, 174 other additional cases were reported and investigated and no jurisdiction was assumed (NJA).

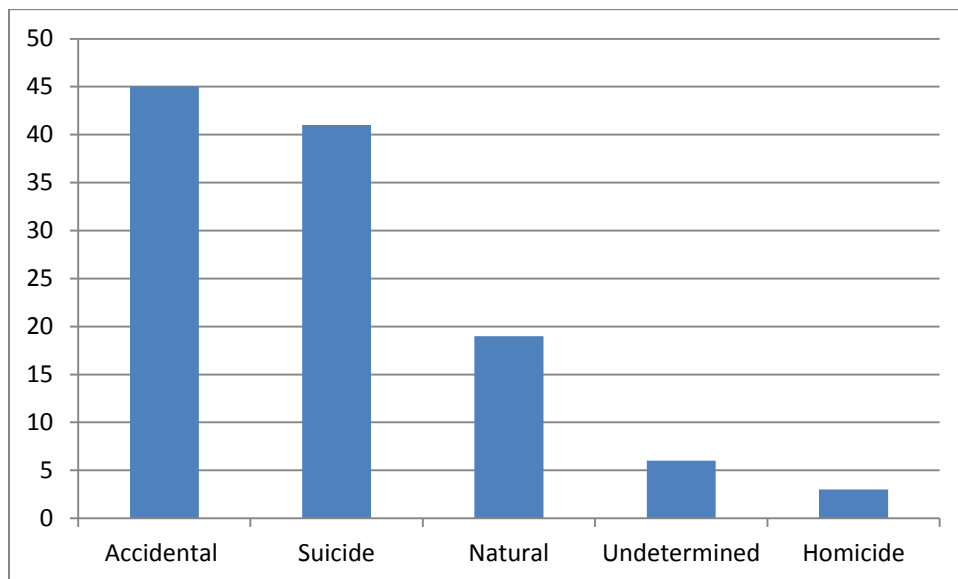
Local agencies brought miscellaneous bones on nine occasions to the Medical Examiner to determine if they were of human origin.

Teaching and public relations are also an important part of the Medical Examiner's office. Consulting was ongoing with the fire and police departments of the county and St. Joseph's Hospital. In addition, college and high school classes toured the morgue facility. The Medical Examiner also represented the office on numerous occasions to various civic organizations and gave multiple lectures at Whatcom Community College, Western Washington University and the University of Washington.

**Gary Goldfogel, MD
Whatcom County Medical Examiner**

During 2013 the Whatcom County Medical Examiner's Office conducted 114 forensic death investigations as stated on the previous page. The manner of death was certified as 45 Accidental, 41 Suicide, 19 Natural, 6 Undetermined and 3 Homicides. The following statistics and graphs show the breakdown of the various causes of the deaths and the age and sex of those who died.

Whatcom County Medical Examiner's Office Death Investigations 2013



ACCIDENTAL:

There were 45 total investigated accidental deaths in which 34 of the victims were male and 11 were female. The circumstances of death were as follows: Traffic (19), Drugs (14), Fire (4), Fall (3), Respiratory related (2), Alcohol (1), Drowning (1) and Gunshot (1).

By age, approximately (2%) were between one and ten years of age, (16%) between 10-19, (22%) between 20-29, (18%) between 30-39, (13%) between 40-49, (13%) between 50-59, (7%) between 60-69, (7%) between 70-79 and (2%) between 80-89 years of age.

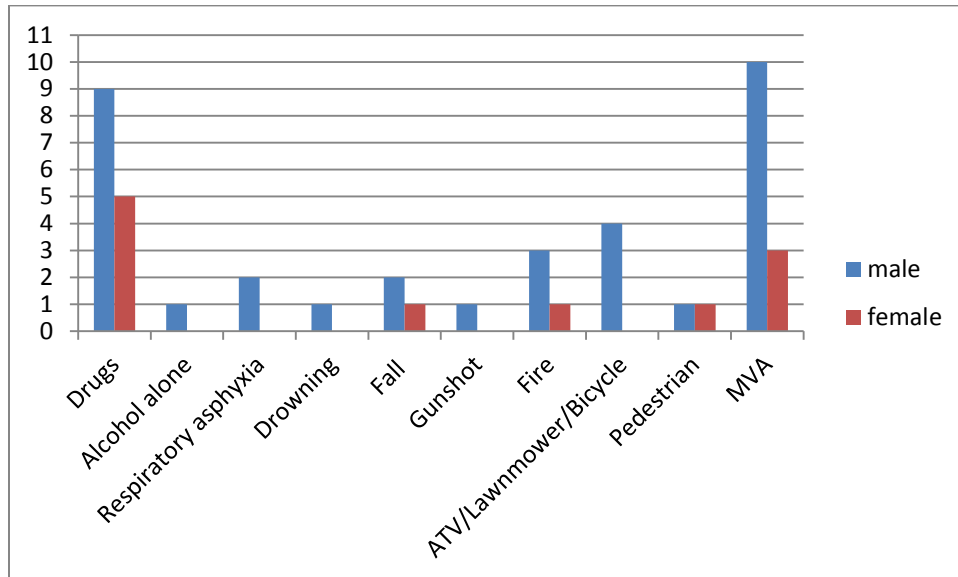
Alcohol was present in 14 accidental deaths with an average blood alcohol concentration of 0.21 gm%. Seatbelts in motor vehicle fatal accidents were not worn 53 % of the time.

A helmet was worn in the one motorcycle accident.

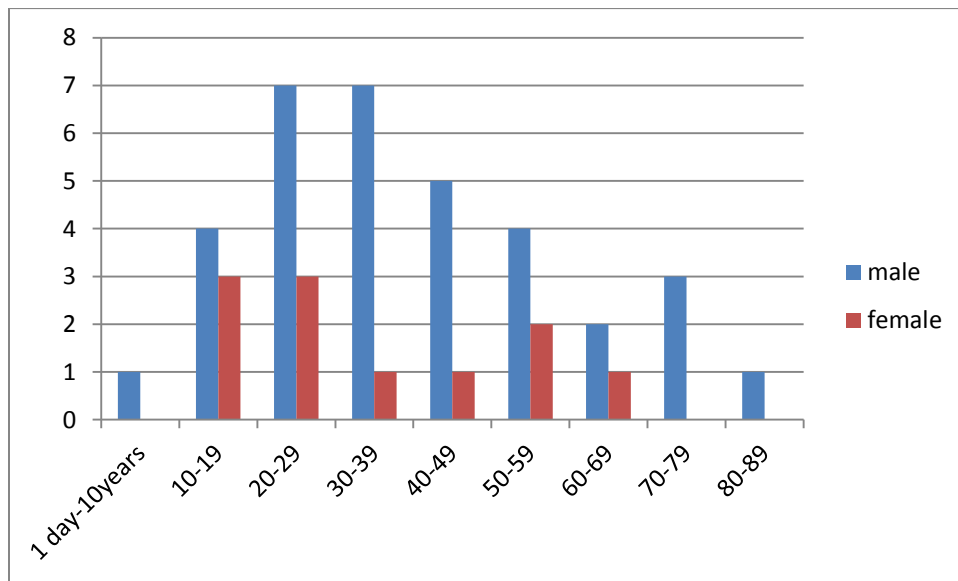
Unfortunately, headlights and visible clothing were not worn for the one bicycle and one pedestrian accidental deaths.

Drugs accounted for 52% of all accidental deaths and predominately included methamphetamine, opiates, marijuana and benzodiazepines, and to a lesser degree methadone, cocaine and antidepressants.

Accidental Deaths



Accidental Deaths by Age and Sex



* Blue bars are male and red bars are female.

SUICIDE:

There were 41 total investigated suicide deaths of which 29 were male and 12 were female. The causes of death were as follows: Gunshot (21), Hanging (7), Drugs & Alcohol (7), Asphyxia (4) Jumped into Nooksack Falls (1) and Hit by Train (1).

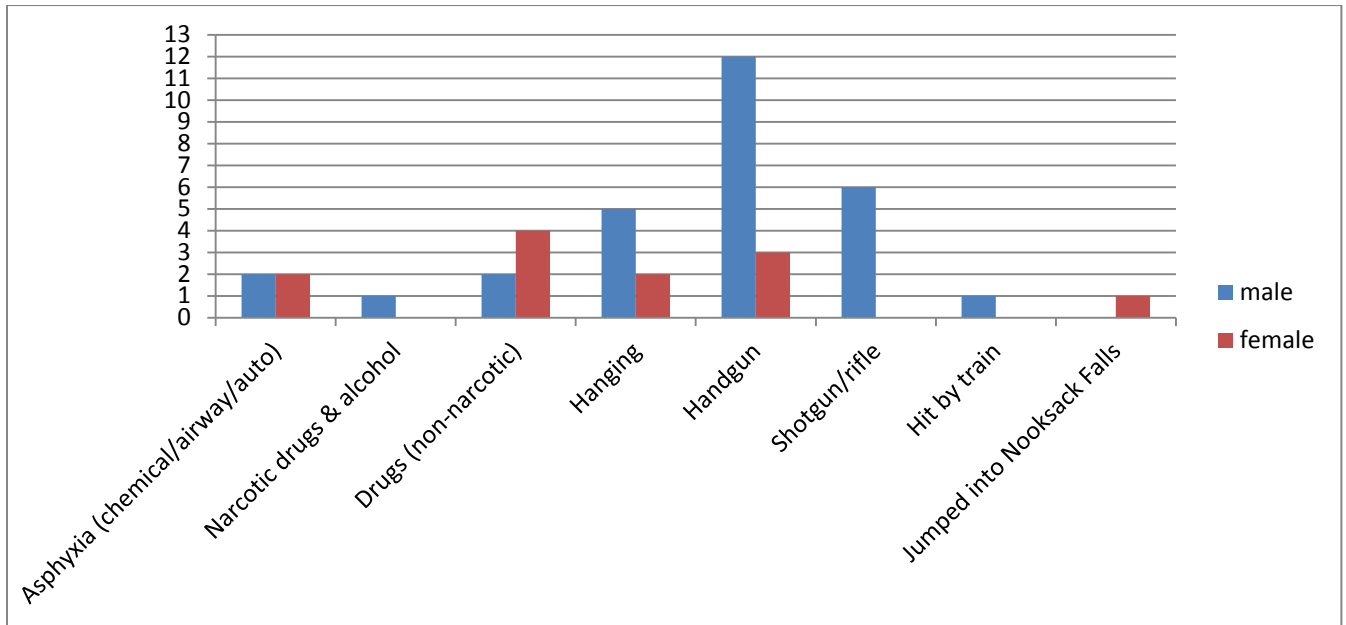
In the 21 gunshot suicides, handguns were used 71 % of the time, rifles and shotguns were used 29 % of the time.

Alcohol was present in 37% of the suicide deaths with an average blood alcohol reading of 0.15 gm%.

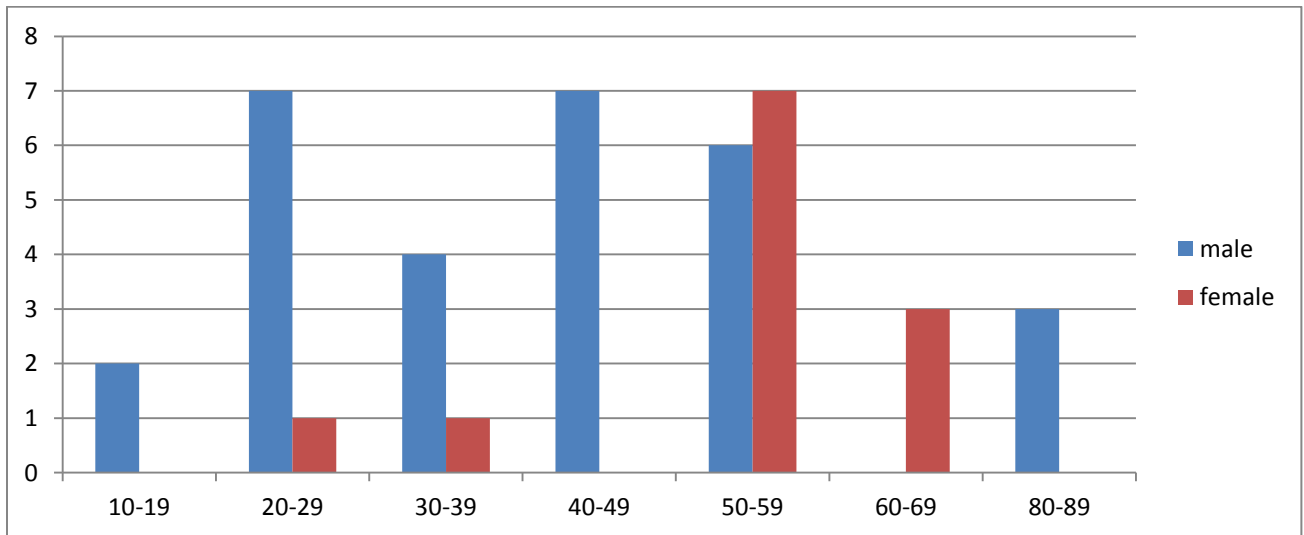
Narcotic drugs were present in 56% of the suicide deaths and included: Opiates (20%), benzodiazepines (17%), amphetamines (7%), marijuana (7%) and methadone (5%).

By age, approximately (5 %) were between 10-19, (20 %) between 20-29, (12 %) between 30-39, (17%) between 40-49, (32%) between 50-59, (7%) between 60-69, and (7%) between 80-89 years of age.

Suicide Deaths by Mechanism of Injury



Suicide Deaths by Age and Sex



*Blue bars are male and red bars female.

NATURAL:

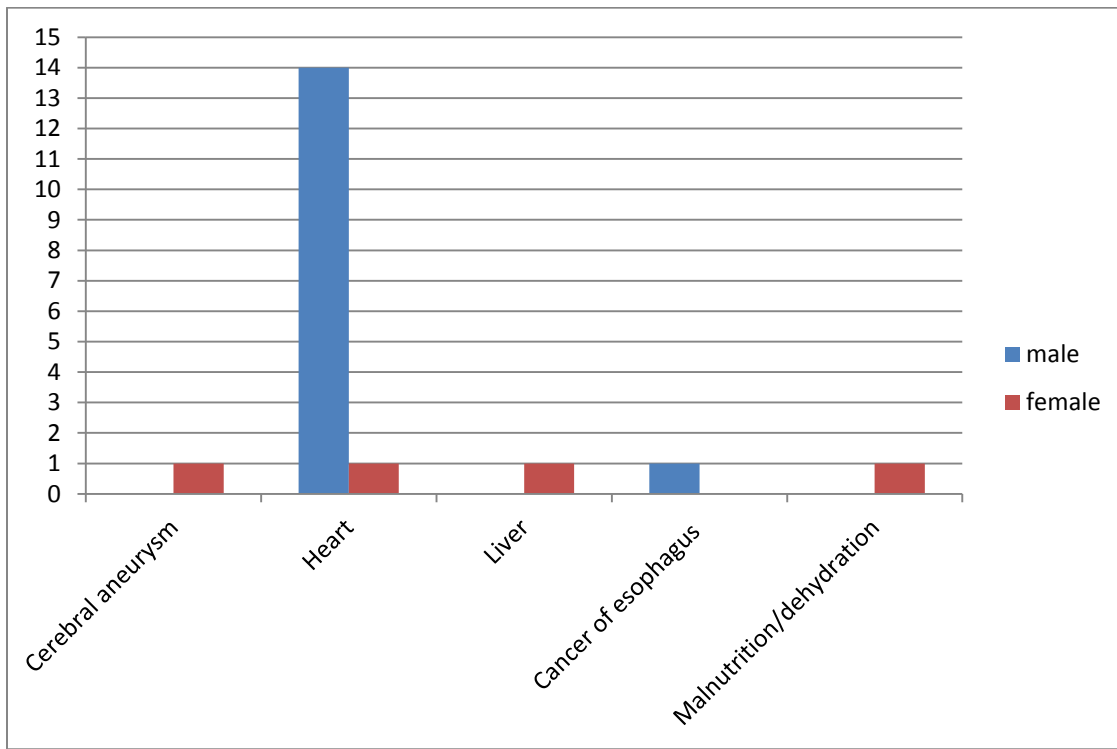
There were 19 total investigated natural unexpected/unexplained deaths of which 14 were male and 5 were female. The causes of death were as follows: Heart (15), Cerebral aneurysm (1), Liver (1), Malnutrition/dehydration (1) and Cancer of the esophagus (1). Interestingly, 9 of the 19 natural deaths were moderate to morbidly obese.

Alcohol was present in just one case with a reading of 0.26 gm%.

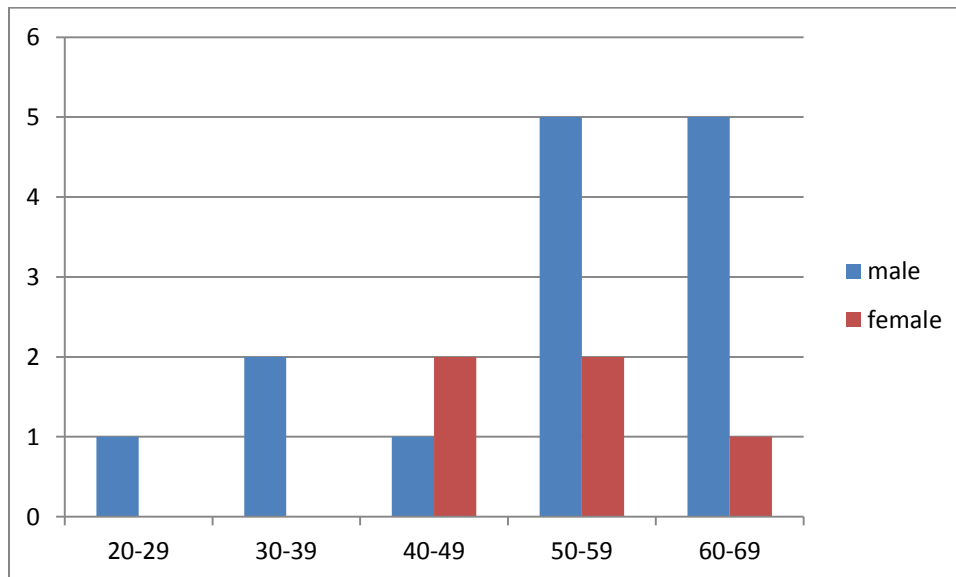
Drugs were present in 89% of the cases and included benzodiazepines (35%), opiates (24%), marijuana (23%), amphetamines (12%) and cocaine (6%).

By age, approximately (5%) were between 20-29 years of age, (11) between 30-39, (16) between 40-49, (36) between 50-59 and (32%) between 60-69 years of age.

Natural Deaths by Cause



Natural Deaths by Age and Sex



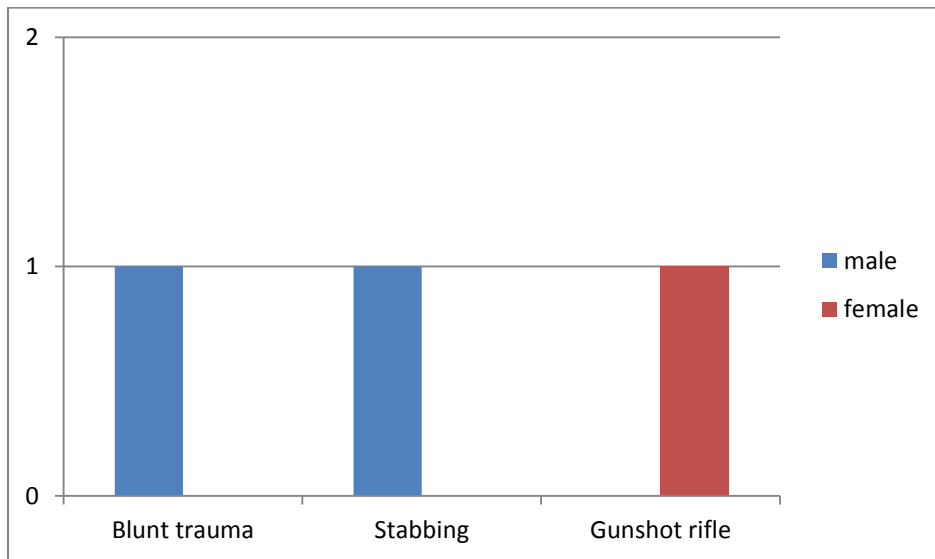
*Blue bars are male and red bars are female.

HOMICIDE:

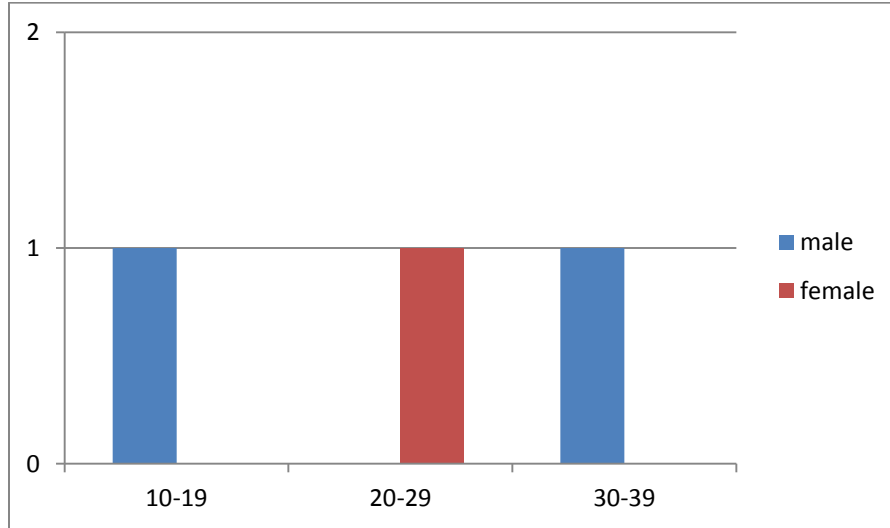
There were three homicide manner of death cases, two male and one female. There was one blunt trauma, one stabbing and one gunshot. One of the cases had no drugs detected. Alcohol and cocaine was present in one of the victims and the blood alcohol level was 0.18 gm%. The third case tested positive for amphetamines, opiates and marijuana.

By age, (1) was between 10-19 years of age, (1) between 20-29 and (1) between 30-39 years of age.

Homicide Deaths by Mechanism of Injury



Homicide Deaths by Age and Sex



*Blue bars are male and red bars are female.

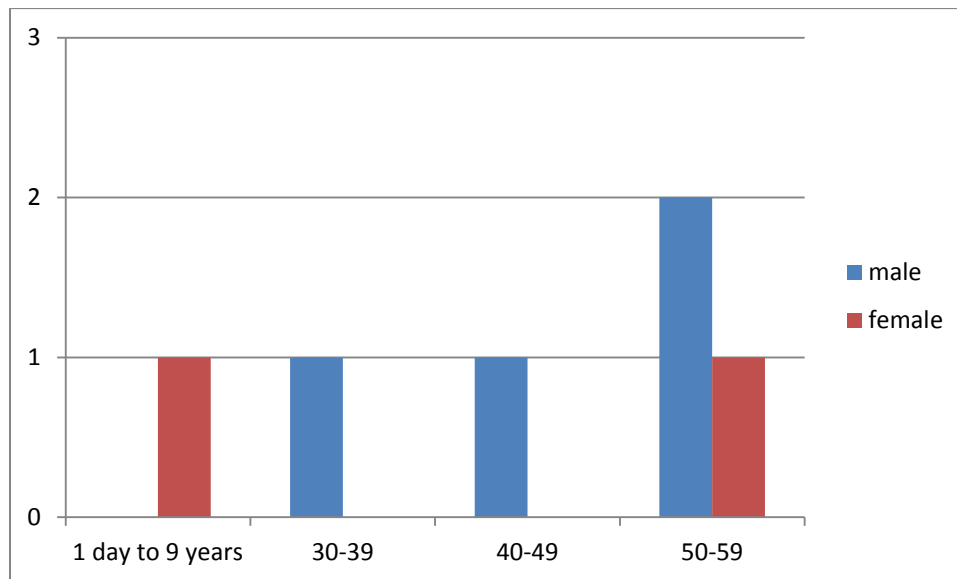
UNDETERMINED:

There were six investigated deaths whose manner of death was listed as undetermined of which four were male and two were female.

Two were cardiac related deaths versus methamphetamine usage/overdose (Natural vs. Accidental). One was a cardiac related death versus opiate usage/overdose (Natural vs. Accidental). One was drowning and alcohol related. One was Sudden Unexplained Infant Death (SUID) versus asphyxia by "overlying" (Natural versus Accidental). The last case was reported as ligature hanging but autopsy results conflict with law enforcement investigation, although foul play is not suspected.

By age, approximately (16%) were between 1 day and 9 years of age, (16%) between 30-39, (16%) between 40-49 and (50%) between 50-59 years of age.

Undetermined Deaths by Age and Sex



*Blue bars are male and red bars are female