

Kitsap County Coroner



2020 Annual Report

Kitsap County Coroner
5010 NW Linden Street
Bremerton, 98312

Last Revised: August 31, 2021

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Message to the Board of Commissioners and Citizens of Kitsap County

The Kitsap County Coroner's Office investigates sudden, violent, unexpected, and suspicious deaths that occur in Kitsap County. The Office of the Medical Examiner certifies death after investigation and postmortem examination and issues the death certificate as required by law. Complete findings of the death investigation are distributed to families and law enforcement agencies as appropriate.

The main duties of the Office of the Coroner are to determine the cause and manner of death, and certify deaths that are reported to the medical examiner. The cause of death is the disease process or injury that resulted in death. There are thousands of diseases and injuries that may result in death. The manner of death is a classification in which a determination is made regarding whether the death resulted from natural causes, homicide, suicide, or an accident. On occasion, the manner of death is classified as indeterminate.

Information collected during the investigation helps clarify the circumstances, such as the sequence of events prior to death. Evidence collected during an investigation and/or postmortem examination may help lead to the arrest or successful conviction of a suspect in a homicide case. Because deaths occur around the clock, medical examiner staff members are available 24 hours a day, 365 days per year.

With the skill and experience of the Coroner investigators (Deputy Coroners) and board-certified forensic pathologists, we believe the quality of death investigations in Kitsap County are among the best in the State. The death scene investigation reports filed by the investigators are very thorough and supply comprehensive information to the medical examiners.

Our forensic pathologists and investigators also extend their duties to the living by answering questions and addressing concerns regarding deaths within the county. Deputy Coroners frequently make personal contact with family members of a deceased and assist them by providing appropriate answers regarding the circumstances of the death. Deputy Coroners are supplied with a pamphlet for distribution to families. The information provides answers to common questions and facts about autopsies and also provides resource information pertaining to grief counseling.

In November 2019 our office began use of a web based death investigation report system. The transition to this system has enabled our office to perform paperless reporting, and web-based information sharing with families and investigators from other agencies. In addition, this system has allowed us to automatically notify tissue and organ donation organizations when a potential eligible donor is logged into our system. This has resulted in 240 referrals, and 30 successful tissue/cornea/organ donations. This system also allows us the ability to track case status's in real-time, and access case information from anywhere we have access to the internet. This transition was made at no cost to Kitsap County, through cooperation with the Forensics Investigation Council (FIC) and the Washington Association of Coroner's and Medical Examiners (WACME).

We extend our sincere gratitude to the Kitsap County Board of Commissioners for their support of the medical examiner program and the services we provide to the citizens of the Kitsap County.

Coroner's Staff

Jeff Wallis
Coroner

Aaron Davis
Deputy Coroner

Nathan Edwards
Deputy Coroner

Debra Halsted
Deputy Coroner

Lindsey Harle M.D.
Pathologist

Dale Johnson
Deputy Coroner

Emanuel Lacsina M.D.
Pathologist

Megan Quinn, M.D.
Forensic Pathologist

Jaime Taylor
Deputy Coroner

Debra Halsted
Deputy Coroner

Virgil Pentz
Deputy Coroner

James Porter
Deputy Coroner

Samantha Sakowski
Autopsy Technician

Heidi Dombrock
Fiscal Tech

Katherine Taylor M.D.
Forensic Anthropologist

Rebecca Wildes
Deputy Coroner

Types of Deaths Reportable to the Coroner's Office

The Revised Code of Washington (RCW) sections 36.24, and 68.50, and 68.64.190 governs the responsibilities of the Coroner's Office, and outlines which deaths must be referred for investigation (see list below). These deaths include sudden and unexpected deaths, accidental deaths, and violent deaths. The Coroner has the authority under these laws to order an autopsy at any time it is deemed necessary to determine or confirm the cause and manner of death.

Deaths Reportable to the Coroners Office:

- Violent death (e.g., strangulation, gunshot, stabbing, poisoning, etc.)
- Accidental deaths (e.g., falls, drowning, motor vehicle collisions, burns, overdose, etc.)
- Death of a prisoner (e.g., deaths in any county or city jail while imprisoned or in custody).
- Suspicious Circumstances (e.g., Unidentified Bodies or events surrounding death)
- Sudden and Unexpected deaths (e.g., all deaths during a surgical procedure, in recovery, anesthesia-related, unexpected natural death, occupational-related deaths)*
- Without medical attendance within 48 hours of death:
 - In cases of chronic illness, the attending physician may sign the death certificate if s/he can be reasonably certain of the cause of death.
- Death of a mother due to an abortion.
- All infant deaths

The Coroner will generally order an autopsy for any of the reportable deaths listed above.

Kitsap County Coroner Cases

Population	275,611
Cases Reported to Coroner's Office	575
A. Number of deaths certified after postmortem examination	153
1. Number of Coroner Cases with Complete Autopsy	153
2. Number of Coroner Cases with External Examination	86
3. Number of Coroner Cases with Limited Examination	N/A
B. Number of deaths certified without postmortem examination	86
C. Number of deaths not certified by Coroner's Office after investigation	236

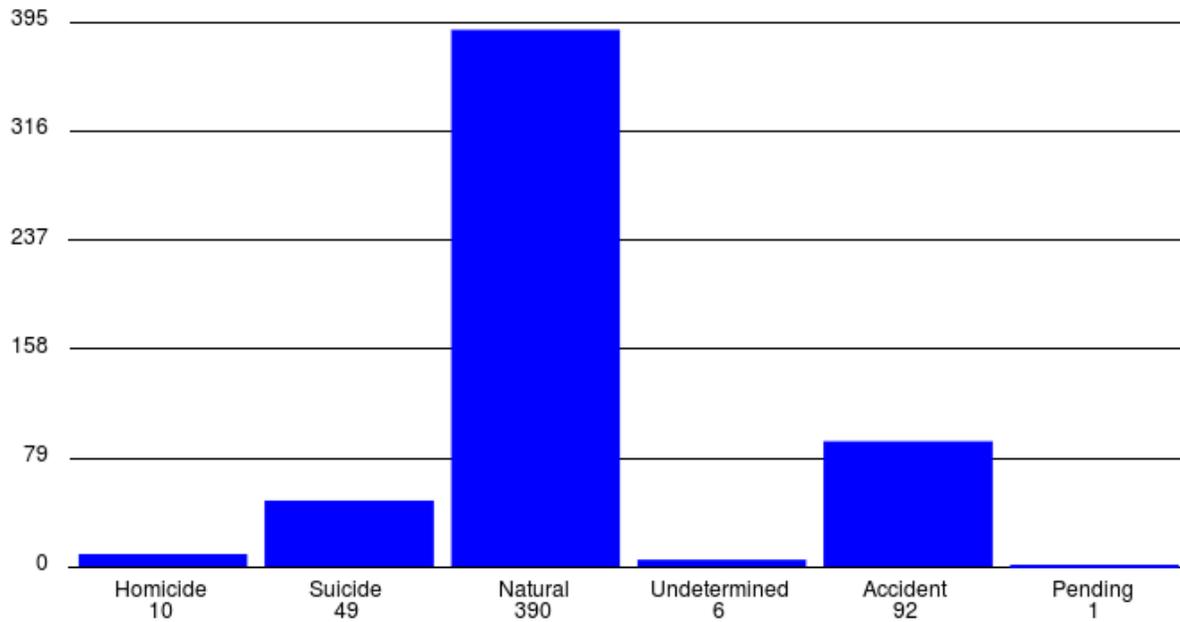
Definitions

Full Autopsy: A complete external and internal examination of a decedent

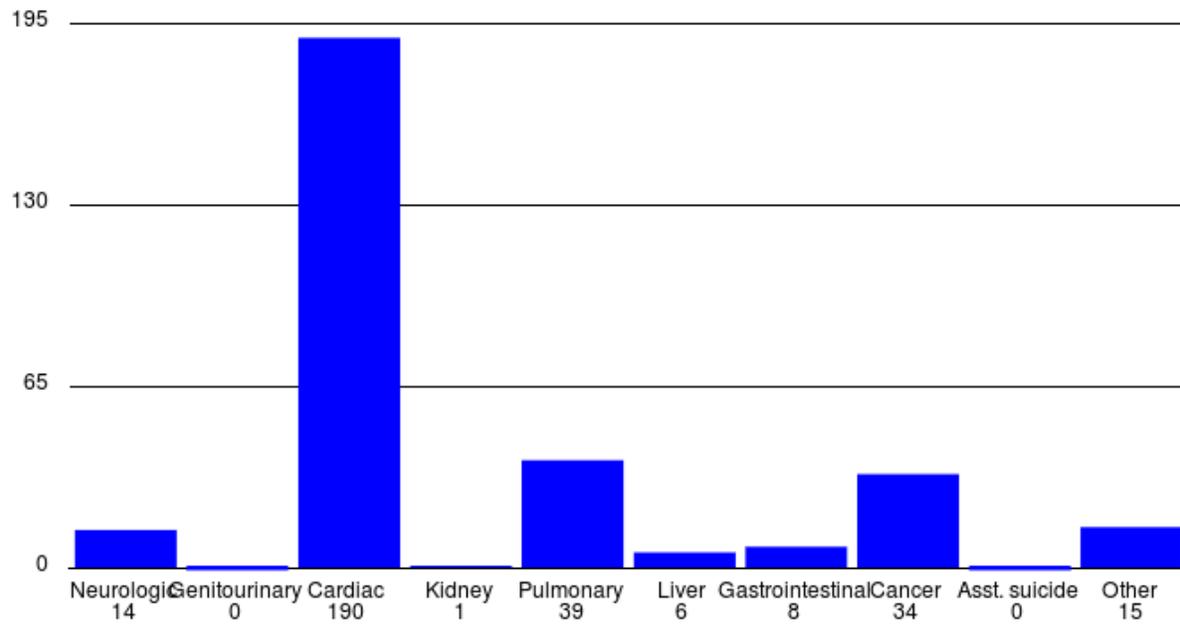
Limited Examination: An examination which is focused on a specific organ or region of the body, i.e., heart. The limited examination also includes an external examination.

External Examination: An examination of the exterior of a decedent.

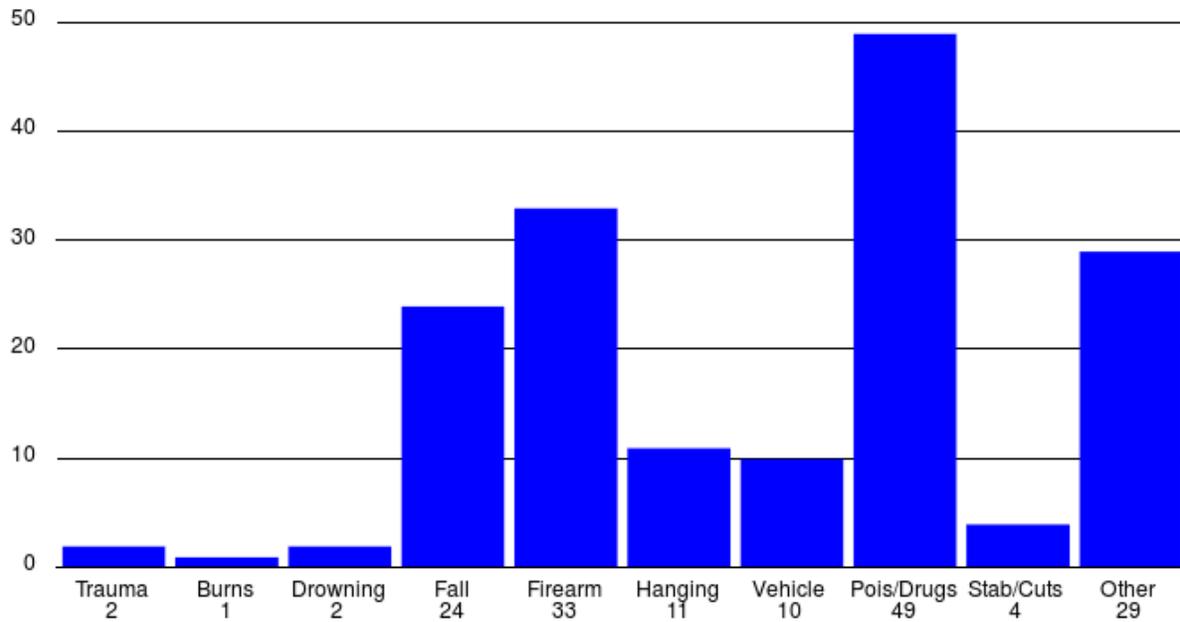
Manner of Death by Postmortem Examination



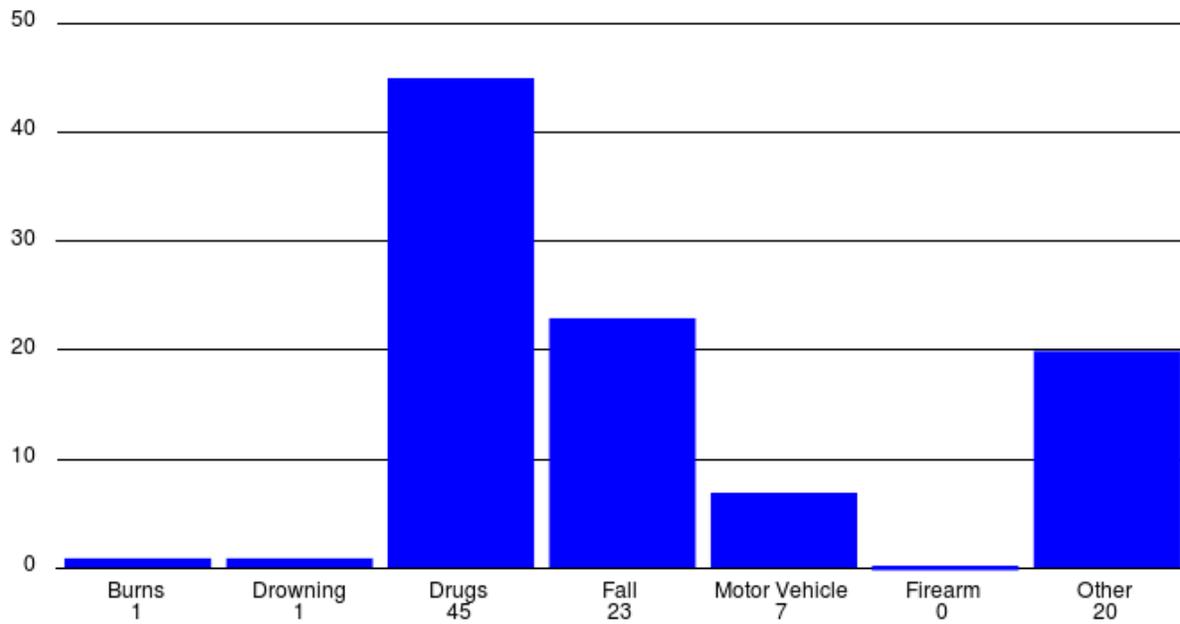
Deaths by Natural Causes



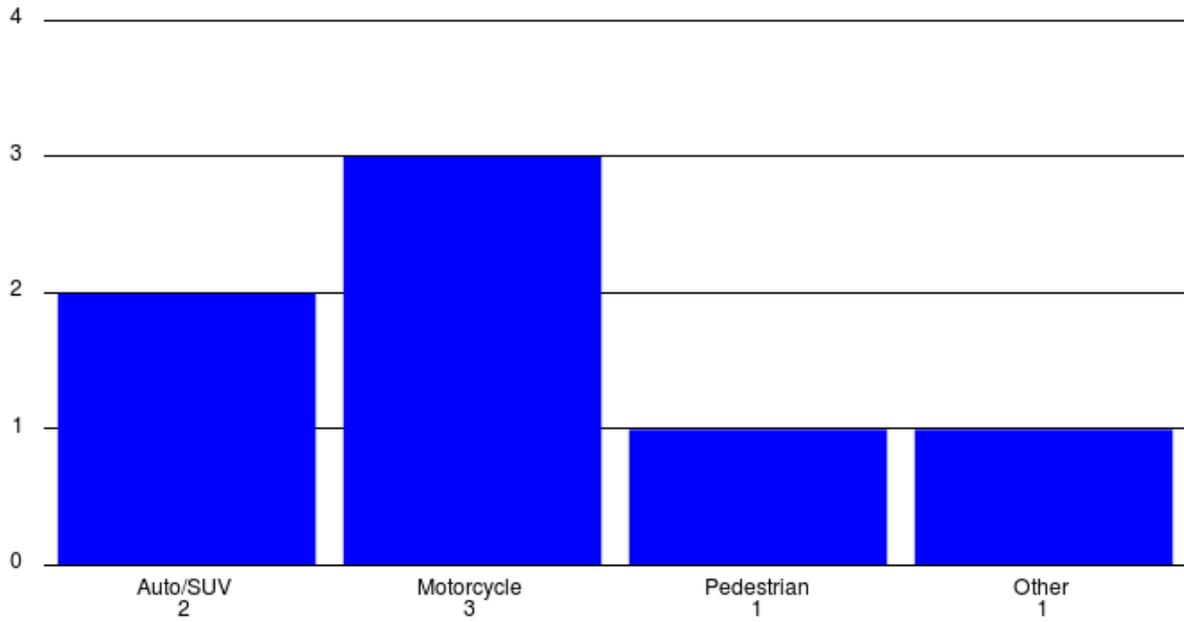
Deaths by Unnatural Causes



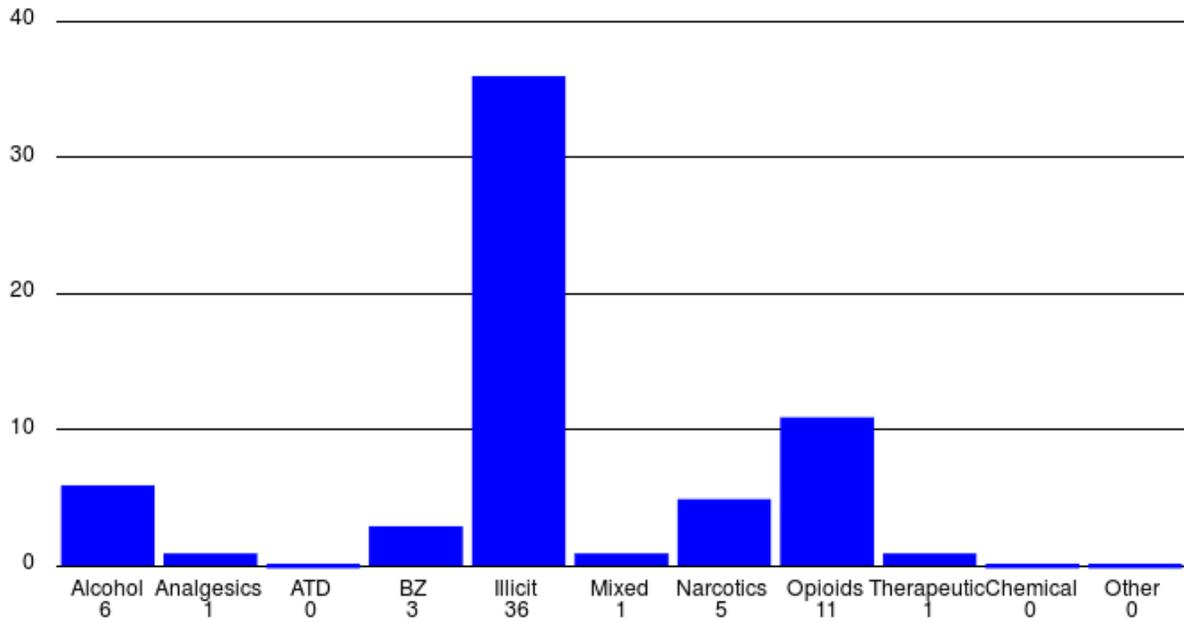
Accidental Deaths by Type



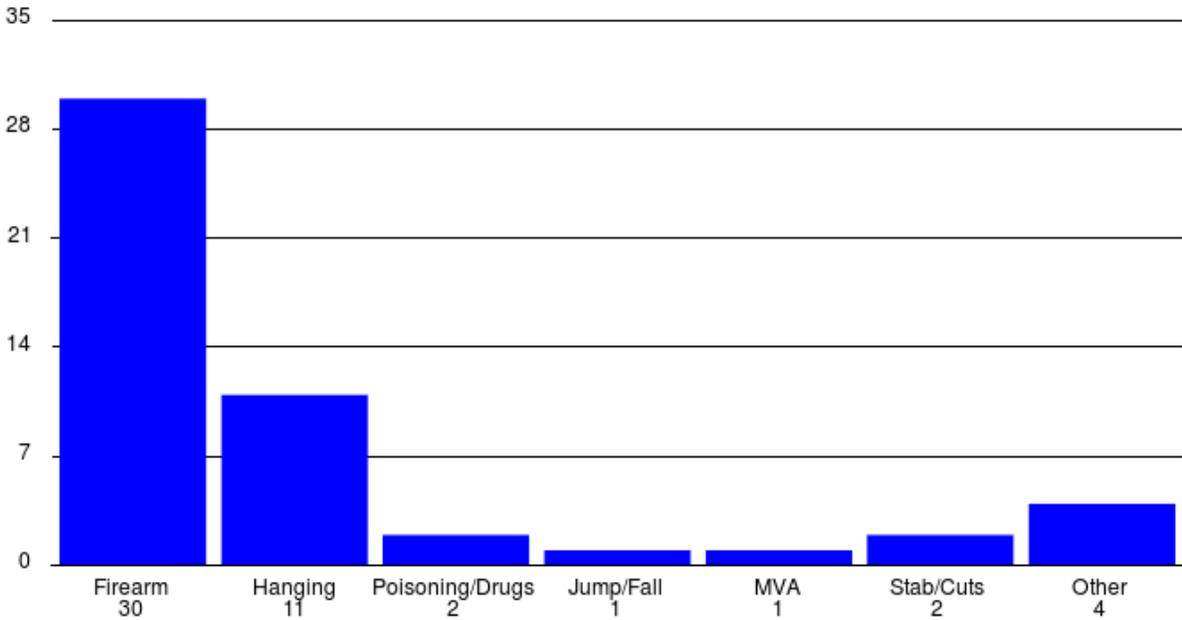
Accidental Deaths - Motor Vehicle Crashes



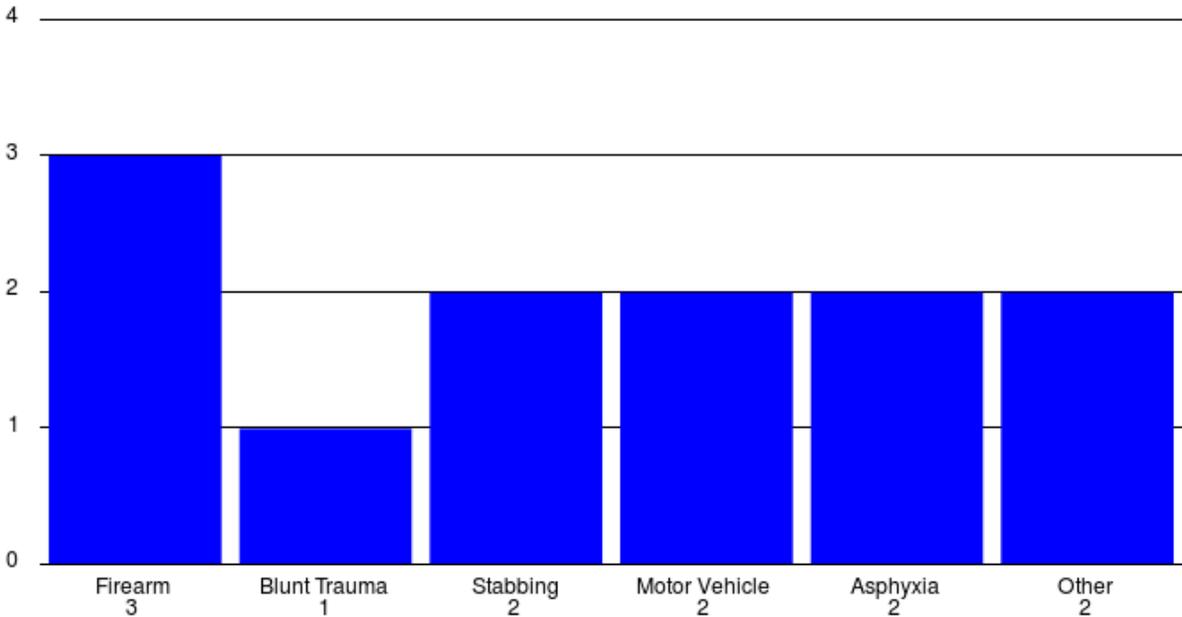
Drugs Contributing to Cause of Death



Suicide by Means



Homicide Deaths



Deaths by Age Group

