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This report provides a summary and statistical analysis of the deaths that were investigated by the Mesa County Coroner's Office in the year 2012. Mesa County encompasses an area over 3300 square miles which consists of desert, agricultural and mountain areas. Mesa County is home to approximately 147,000 people in 12 communities. The largest of these is Grand Junction, followed by Fruita and Palisade. Other towns and unincorporated areas of the County include Clifton, Fruitvale, De Beque, Collbran, Mesa, Mack, Loma, Gateway, Glade Park and Whitewater.

The Coroner and/or Deputy Coroner are on duty 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. The Coroner's mission is to satisfy the legal requirements of the office in an expeditious manner. The primary task of the Coroner's Office is to determine the cause and manner of death of those who have died in Mesa County or in those whose traumatic event originated in Mesa County. An autopsy may be required depending upon the circumstances of the death.

The Coroner's Office investigates sudden, unexpected deaths, especially those that occur under violent or suspicious circumstances. Those deaths to be reported to the Mesa County Coroner's Office include all deaths occurring in Mesa County as outlined below regardless of where or when the initial injuring event occurred. In addition, all deaths as outlined below shall be reported that occurred outside of Mesa County but the initiating injuring event occurred in Mesa County.

- From disease which may be hazardous or contagious or which may constitute a threat to the health of the general public
- From external violence, an unexplained cause, or under suspicious circumstances
- Where no physician is in attendance, or where, though in attendance, the physician is unable to certify the cause of death
- From thermal, chemical, or radiation injury
- From criminal abortion
- While in the custody of law enforcement officials or while incarcerated in a public institution
- When the death was sudden and happened to a person who was in good health
- From an industrial accident or any death suspected to involved with the decedent's occupation
- When death occurs in a hospital less than 24 hours after admission to a hospital or after any invasive procedure
- Any death suspected to be due to alcohol intoxication or the result of exposure to drugs or toxic agents
- Any death due to neglect or suspected neglect
- Any stillbirth of 20 or more weeks gestational age unattended by a physician
- Any maternal death to include death of a pregnant woman regardless of the length of the pregnancy, and up to six weeks (or one year) post-delivery, even where the cause of death is unrelated to the pregnancy
- Any death of an infant or child where the medical history has not established a significant pre-existing condition

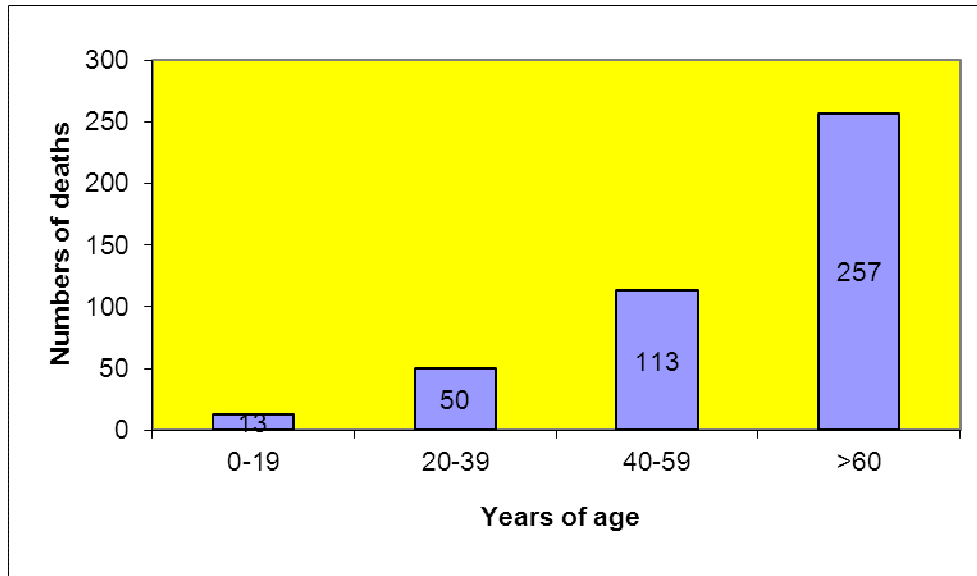
Staff

Dean Havlik, M.D.	Coroner & Forensic Pathologist
Kim Hollingshead, D-ABMDI	Chief Deputy Coroner
Victor Yahn	Deputy Coroner
Brian Clark	Deputy Coroner
Jody Hudson	Deputy Coroner
Robert Kurtzman, D.O.	Forensic Pathologist

General Statistics

Mesa County population in 2012 (2011 census data)	147,083
Total Mesa County deaths	1489
Percentage of Mesa County citizens who died in 2012	1.0%
Number of deaths investigated	433
Percentage of deaths investigated	29.1%
Number of postmortem examinations	134
Percentage of deaths having an examination	9.0%
Gender of those deaths investigated	
Males	282
Females	151
Race of those deaths investigated	
Caucasian	397
Hispanic	29
Native American	3
Black	1
Other	3

Age



** In the 0 to 19 years old group, 11 were males and 2 were females. Of these, 5 were natural deaths, 6 were accidental deaths, 1 was a suicide and 1 was a homicide. Of the 6 accidental deaths, 2 were hyperthermia related deaths (same incident with two young children left in vehicle), 1 was a motor vehicle accident, 1 was an infant who died of asphyxia due to co-sleeping with an adult, 1 was from complications of a leg fracture in a child with cerebral palsy and 1 was from complications of a near-drowning incident that occurred several years ago. The suicide was from a gunshot wound in a 14 year old boy. The homicide was a 19 year old male who died of strangulation. There were no child abuse related homicides in 2012.

Manner of Death

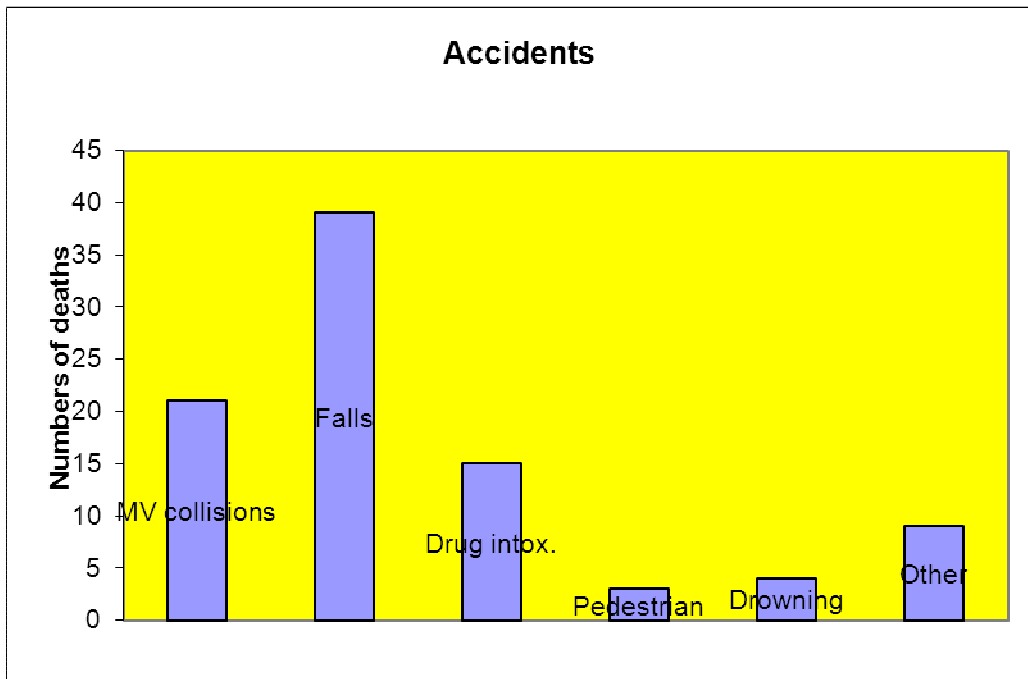
Manner	# of cases	# of postmortem exams	% receiving a postmortem exam **
Natural	276	31	11%
Accident	91	39	43%
Suicide	47	46	98%
Homicide	7	6	86%
Undetermined	12	12	100%

** In the 52 accidental deaths in which no postmortem examination was performed, the majority was of decedents who were hospitalized for an extended period of time and the injuries were documented in the hospital or care facility. Of these deaths, 9 were motor vehicle accidents, 37 were falls predominantly from a standing height in older individuals, 1 was from a motor vehicle versus pedestrian accident, 2 were from complications of a medical procedure, 1 was from a near drowning even that occurred several years before,

1 was a drug intoxication death and 1 was an individual who was hospitalized after a rock hit his head while hiking. The suicide death in which no postmortem examination was performed was in a female who had self-inflicted sharp force injuries of the arms and was hospitalized for an extended period of time. There was no autopsy performed on an elderly man who was pushed by another individual and died after being hospitalized for an extended period of time due to a fractured hip sustained from being pushed to the ground in the incident.

Accidental Deaths

Type	Number of deaths
Motor vehicle (MV) collisions	21
Falls	39
Drug intoxication	15
Pedestrian vs. Motor vehicle (MV)	3
Drowning	4
Other **	9



**The "other" cases include 2 hyperthermia deaths in young boys from the same incident (left in car), 1 death from hypothermia, 1 death of an infant co-sleeping with an adult, 1 death in a man who was hit in the head by a falling rock while hiking, 1 acute alcohol intoxication related death, 2 deaths related to complications from medical therapy and 1 death in a young male from complications of a near drowning event several years ago.

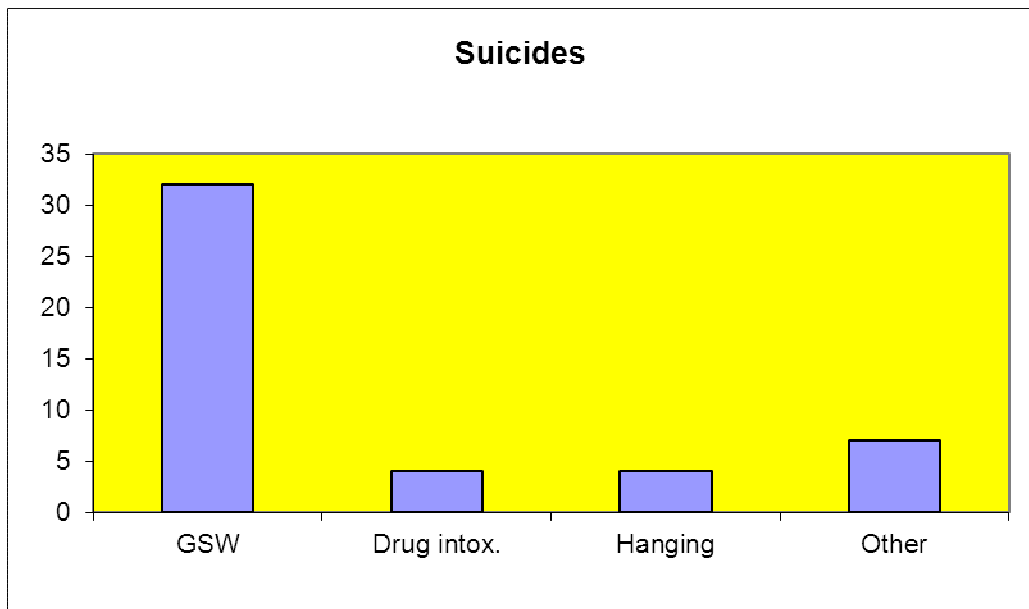
The majority of the falls were of elderly individuals who fell from a standing height, many of which resulting in a fractured hip.

The 21 motor vehicle collision-related deaths displayed the following characteristics:

- Drivers of automobiles – 16
- Passengers of automobiles – 1
- Drivers of motorcycle/ATV wearing a helmet – 2
- Drivers of motorcycle/ATV without a helmet – 1
- Automobile victims wearing a seatbelt – 5
- Automobile victims not wearing a seatbelt – 9
- Automobile victims unknown if wearing a seatbelt – 3
- Alcohol or drugs involved in at least 10 of the deaths (48% of cases)
 - Alcohol only in 7 deaths
 - Alcohol and drugs in 1 death
 - Drugs only in 3 deaths
 - Unknown if alcohol or drugs involved in 5 deaths

Suicides

Type	Number of deaths
Gunshot wounds (GSW)	32
Drug intoxications	4
Hanging	4
Other	7



The following are some features of the suicide deaths:

- 37 males and 10 females
- Males ranged from 14 to 91 years of age (average age 48) and included the following:
 - Gunshot wounds – 28 deaths
 - Drug intoxications – 0 deaths
 - Hanging – 4 deaths
 - Carbon monoxide – 1 death
 - Motor vehicle related – 1 death
 - Jump off Monument – 1 death
 - Sharp force injuries – 1 death
 - Drowning – 1 death
- Females ranged from 26 to 60 years of age (average age 38) and included the following:
 - Gunshot wounds – 4 deaths
 - Drug intoxications – 4 deaths
 - Hanging – 0 deaths
 - Went in front of moving train – 1 death
 - Sharp force injuries – 1 death

Homicides

The 7 homicides had the following characteristics:

- 2 deaths due to stabbing
- 2 deaths due to strangulation
- 1 death due to gunshot wounds
- 1 death of an elderly man pushed by another elderly person resulting in hip fracture and extended hospitalization
- 1 death from undetermined causes in a female who went missing approximately 5 years ago under suspicious circumstances (skeletal remains)

Undetermined deaths

There were 12 deaths that had an undetermined manner of death. Ten of these deaths were drug intoxications. The manner was undetermined in these deaths primarily due to the lack of evidence indicating whether these deaths were suicides, i.e. intentional ingestion of the drug(s), versus accidental over usage of the drug(s). There was one death due to blunt force injuries that were either sustained in a fall or after being assaulted. The other undetermined death was in an alcoholic female where there was a question of neglect in the care of her by others.

Natural deaths

Of the 276 natural deaths investigated, the majority were cardiovascular related (181 deaths, 66%). Deaths due to cardiovascular causes include myocardial infarcts (heart attacks), heart arrhythmias, strokes and aneurysms. There were 15 deaths related to infectious causes (predominantly pneumonia in elderly individuals), 15 cancer related deaths, 11 deaths related to chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (emphysema) and 20 deaths due to effects of chronic alcoholism.

Notes of interest

A child is defined as a person 18 years old or less. There were no child abuse related homicides in 2012. As a comparison, there was 1 child homicide in 2011 (blunt force injuries in an infant), 1 in 2010 (shooting of a teenager by another teenager), no child homicides in 2009, 3 child homicides in 2008 and 2 child homicides in 2007. Overall, the numbers of homicides in 2012 (7 cases) were similar to other years (9 homicides in 2011, 8 homicides in 2010, 5 homicides in 2009, 9 homicides in 2008 and 6 homicides in 2007). The numbers of suicides had decreased over the years during 2007-2010 but were back up again in 2011 with 44 cases and up even more in 2012 (47 cases). There were 32 suicides in 2010, 35 suicides in 2009, 39 in 2008 and 43 in 2007.