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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 2013. 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

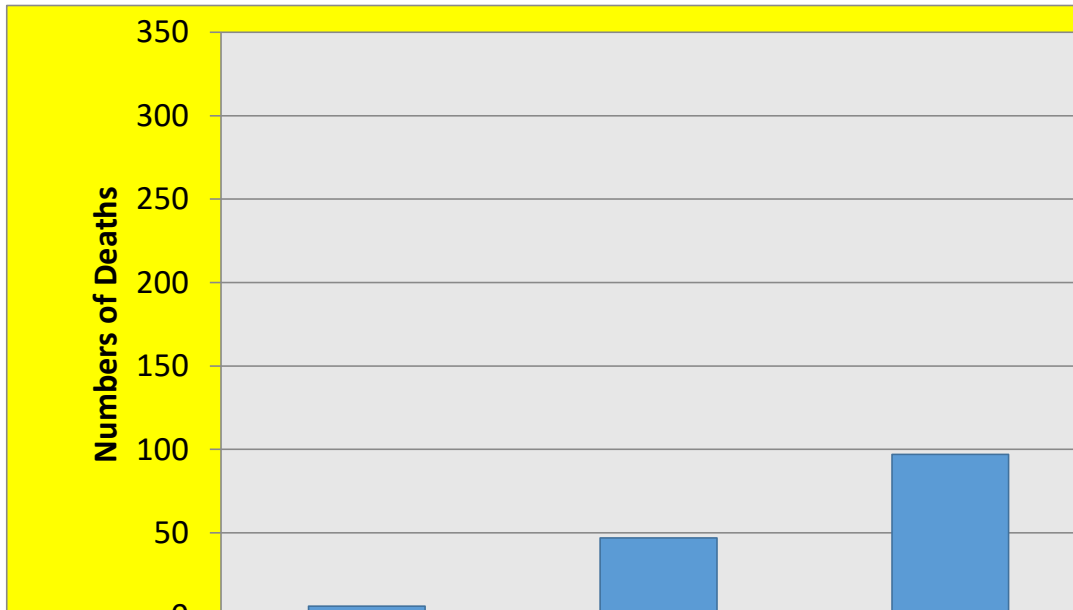
Staff

Dean Havlik, M.D.	Coroner & Forensic Pathologist
Victor Yahn, D-ABMDI	Chief Deputy Coroner
Chuck Nelson	Deputy Coroner
Brian Clark	Deputy Coroner
Jody Hudson	Deputy Coroner
Shaye Schottel	Deputy Coroner

General Statistics

Mesa County population in 2013 (2012 census data)	147,554
Total Mesa County deaths	1497
Percentage of Mesa County citizens who died in 2013	1.0%
Number of deaths investigated	437
Percentage of deaths investigated	29.2%
Number of postmortem examinations	105
Percentage of deaths having an examination	7.0%
Gender of those deaths investigated	
Males	270
Females	167
Race of those deaths investigated	
Caucasian	403
Hispanic	25
Native American	0
Black	5
Other	4

Age



** In the 0 to 19 years old group there were 6 deaths which included 5 males and 1 female. Of these, 2 were natural deaths, 3 were accidental deaths, 1 was a suicide and there were no homicides. Of the 3 accidental deaths, 1 was a fall from a cliff of an 18 year old and 2 were infants who died of positional asphyxia due to poor sleeping arrangements. The suicide was from a gunshot wound in a 12 year old boy. There were no child abuse related homicides in 2013.

Manner of Death

Manner	# of cases	# of postmortem exams	% receiving a postmortem exam **
Natural	291	15	5%
Accident	97	50	55%
Suicide	29*	28	97%
Homicide	7	7	100%
Undetermined	5*	5	100%

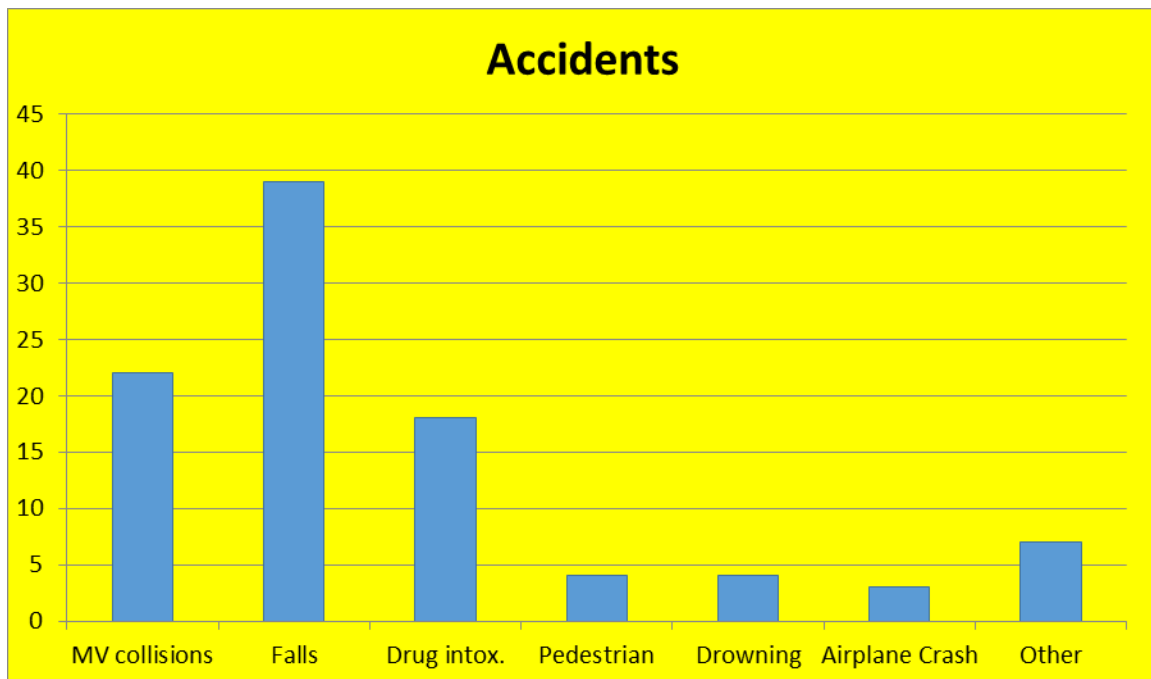
*There were 3 other suicides and 1 additional undetermined death that were reported to the office but they were deaths in which the incident occurred in a different county and therefore the jurisdiction was transferred back to the other county.

** In the 51 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, 7 were motor vehicle accidents, 34 were falls predominantly from a standing height in older individuals,

1 was from a motor vehicle versus pedestrian accident, 3 were from complications of a medical procedure, 3 were drug intoxication deaths, 1 was a fall from a horse, 1 was a fall from a cliff, and 1 was an individual who was hospitalized after a biking accident. The suicide death in which no postmortem examination was performed was in a male who had complications of an acetaminophen overdose and was hospitalized for an extended period of time.

Accidental Deaths

Type	Number of deaths
Motor vehicle (MV) collisions	22
Falls	39
Drug intoxication	18
Pedestrian vs. Motor vehicle (MV)	4
Drowning	4
Airplane Crash	3
Other **	7



**The “other” cases include 1 hyperthermia death in a man that got lost while riding his motorcycle in the desert, 2 infant positional asphyxia deaths with poor bedding, 1 death of a man who got trapped underneath a car, and 3 deaths related to complications from medical therapy.

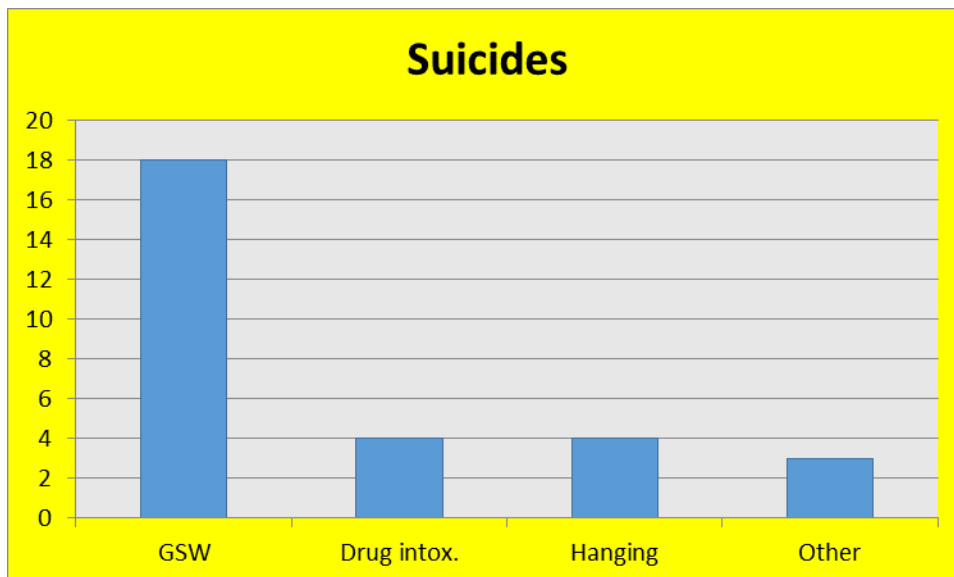
The majority of the falls were of elderly individuals who fell from a standing height, many of which resulting in a fractured hip.

The 22 motor vehicle collision-related deaths displayed the following characteristics:

- Drivers – 18
- Passengers – 4
- Drivers of motorcycle/ATV wearing a helmet – 7
- Drivers of motorcycle/ATV without a helmet – 3
- Automobile victims wearing a seatbelt – 6
- Automobile victims not wearing a seatbelt – 3
- Automobile victims unknown if wearing a seatbelt – 3
- Alcohol or drugs involved in at least 8 of the deaths (30% of cases)
 - Alcohol only in 8 deaths
 - Alcohol and drugs in 2 deaths
 - Drugs only in 2 deaths
 - Unknown if alcohol or drugs involved in 1 death

Suicides

Type	Number of deaths
Gunshot wounds (GSW)	18
Drug intoxications	4
Hanging	4
Other	3



The following are some features of the suicide deaths:

- 25 males and 4 females
- Males ranged from 12 to 90 years of age (average age 47) and included the following:
 - Gunshot wound – 17 deaths
 - Drug intoxication – 2 deaths
 - Hanging – 4 deaths
 - Motor vehicle driven off cliff – 1 death
 - Sharp force injuries – 1 death
- Females ranged from 32 to 59 years of age (average age 49) and included the following:
 - Gunshot wound – 1 death
 - Drug intoxication – 2 deaths
 - Jump off CO National Monument – 1 death

Homicides

The 7 homicides had the following characteristics:

- 2 deaths due to blunt force head injuries
- 1 death due to strangulation
- 4 deaths due to gunshot wounds

Undetermined deaths

There were 5 deaths that had an undetermined manner of death. Three 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 in custody of Utah law enforcement. The other undetermined death was an older man that was found submerged in a bathtub but also had heart disease.

Natural deaths

Of the 291 natural deaths investigated, the majority were cardiovascular related (236 deaths, 81%). Deaths due to cardiovascular causes include myocardial infarcts (heart attacks), heart arrhythmias, strokes and aneurysms. There were 10 deaths related to infectious causes (predominantly pneumonia in elderly individuals), 8 cancer related deaths, 5 deaths related to chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (emphysema) and 13 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 2013. As a comparison, there was no child abuse related deaths in 2012, 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 2013 (7 cases) were similar to other years (7 homicides in 2012, 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). In 2013 the numbers dropped again to 29 cases. There were 32 suicides in 2010, 35 suicides in 2009, 39 in 2008 and 43 in 2007.