

Jefferson Parish Coroner



2014 Annual Report

Jefferson Parish Coroner's Office
2018 8th Street
Harvey, Louisiana 70058



Accredited by the
National Association of
Medical Examiners

Last Revised: July 10, 2015

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Message to the Parish Council and the Citizens of Jefferson Parish

Enclosed you will find the Coroner's Annual Report for 2014. Along with the annual report is a 10 year history of the cases investigated by the Jefferson Parish Coroner's Office (JPCO). For the most part, statistics have remained about the same except in two areas, suicide and undetermined. Last year this office embarked on an educational program aimed at suicide prevention among our youth. It is our sincere hope that over time, this program will stem the tide of suicide in Jefferson Parish. The decrease in the number of deaths ruled undetermined is the result of this office adhering to the highest caliber medicolegal death investigations and more rigorous autopsy standards. These standards have been utilized since this office received NAME (National Association of Medical Examiners) accreditation in 2009. That accreditation expired in November and re-accreditation was JPCO's focus as we approached the end of the year.

In the United States there are approximately 2,300 medical examiner/coroner offices to provide death investigation services. Roughly 80% (1,840) are coroner systems and the remaining 20% (460) are medical examiner systems. These offices, whose duties vary from state to state, are responsible for the medicolegal investigation of death which may include, conducting scene investigations, perform autopsies and determine the cause and manner of death.

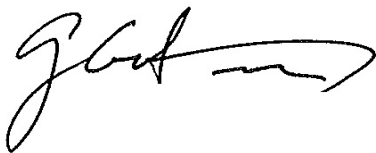
In today's television world, dramas like *CSI* and *NCIS* lead viewers to believe that morgues in the United States are staffed by highly trained professionals all equipped with today's latest technology. That is just not the case. Few offices have x-ray capability, some don't have their own vehicles to transport bodies and the majority don't have in-house toxicology capability. Many offices don't even store records on computer. In addition, there is a national shortage of forensic pathologists, doctors specifically trained to investigate the cause and manner of death.

Of the 2,300 medical examiner/coroner offices in the United States, fewer than 100 are accredited by the National Association of Medical Examiners, the organization which sets the "gold standard" for death investigations. Accreditation demonstrates compliance with industry and professional standards and provides an independent measure of assurance to the tax-paying citizens of the community served. Of that number, only 6 are coroners with one being the Jefferson Parish Coroner's Office.

In 2009, Dr. Robert Treuting (Coroner) and Dr. Charles Eckert (Chief Deputy

Coroner) set out to assure that the citizens of Jefferson Parish received the best in medicolegal death investigation. Application was made to NAME and the staff began the arduous process of compliance with NAME's checklist of 350 items. The checklist consists of items divided into the areas of General (facilities, security, administrative space, safety, maintenance, organ and tissue donations, mass disaster planning, quality assurance, annual statistical reporting), Investigations, Morgue operations, Histology, Toxicology, Reports and Record keeping, Personnel and Staffing, Support services and Consultants. Each checklist item is designated as either a Phase I or Phase II. Full accreditation requires no Phase II and no more than 15 Phase I deficiencies. Inspectors examine the facility during a rigorous two day on-site visit ensuring compliance with each of the 350 tasks. In November, the Office was granted full accreditation which last for five years. Maintenance of accreditation requires annual self-inspection.

In the third quarter of 2014, under the direction of current Coroner Dr. Gerry Cvitanovich and again, Chief Deputy Coroner Dr. Charles Eckert, the wheels were put in motion to earn re-accreditation from NAME. Application was made to NAME in November and an inspector was assigned. The site visit was held on March 9th and 10th of 2015. It is my sincere pleasure to report that the Jefferson Parish Coroner's Office passed the inspection with zero deficiencies. The citizens of Jefferson Parish can be proud of the hard work, dedication and leadership at JPCO. The JPCO is a unique example of an independent office in a coroner system that meets the NAME accreditation standards and works well for our community.

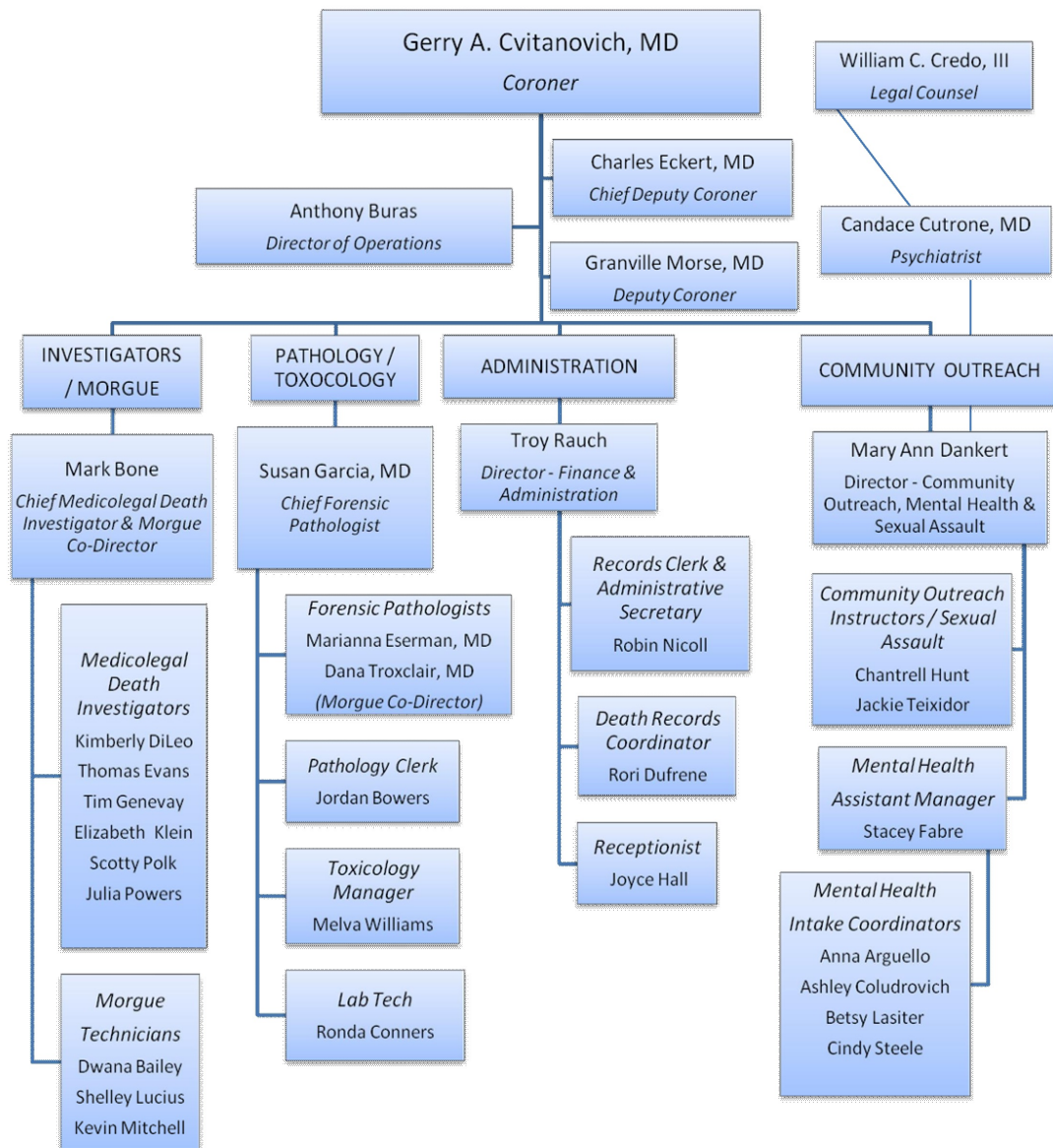
A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Gerry A. Cvitanovich', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Gerry A. Cvitanovich, M.D.

Coroner, Jefferson Parish

Organizational Chart

JEFFERSON PARISH CORONER'S OFFICE ORGANIZATIONAL CHART 2015



Brief Summary 2014

Population (est. 2013)	435,716
Cases Reported to Medical Examiner	2889
A. Number of deaths certified after postmortem examination	488
1. Number of Coroner Cases with Complete Autopsy	421
2. Number of Coroner Cases with External Examination	66
3. Number of Coroner Cases with Limited Examination	1
B. Number of deaths certified without postmortem examination	348
C. Number of deaths not certified by the Coroner's Office after investigation	2056
D. Number of death scene investigations	471
E. Number of unidentified bodies after investigation	0

Definitions

Full Autopsy: A complete external and internal examination of a decedent with toxicological testing.

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 and toxicological testing.

External Examination: An examination of the exterior of a decedent with toxicological testing.

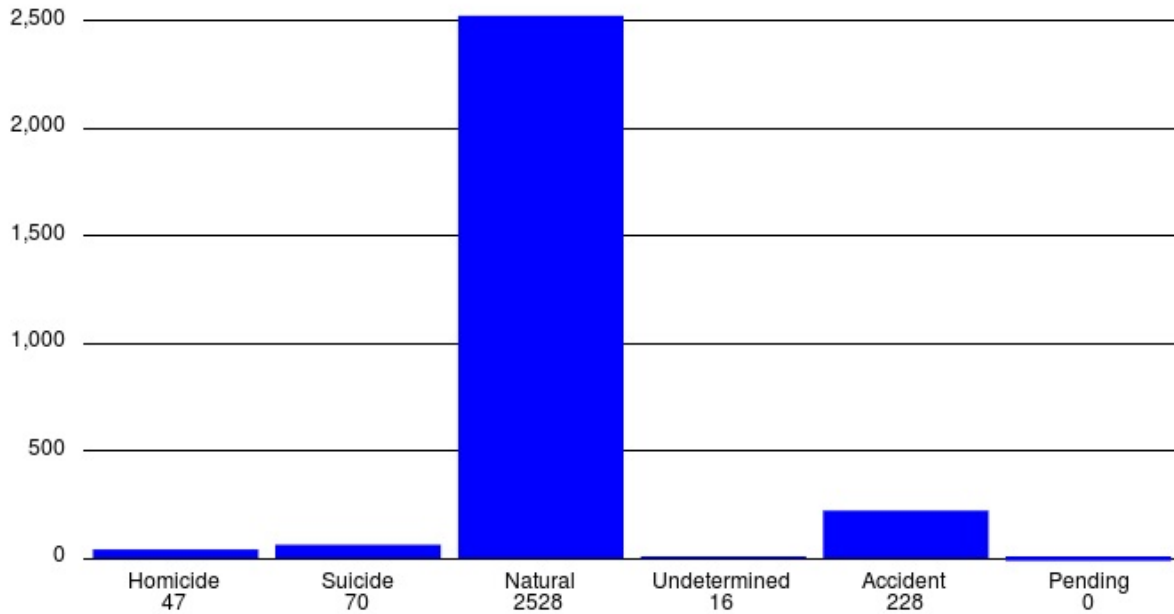
Death Scene Investigation: Pertinent circumstantial and physical observations are documented and photographed and items of evidence are collected in accordance to state law, good forensic principles and accreditation requirements established by the N.A.M.E. and the standards of American Board of Medicolegal Death Investigators (ABMDI).

Types of Deaths Reportable to the Coroner's Office

As per Louisiana RS 13:5713 (A), The coroner shall either view the body or make an investigation into the cause and manner of death in all cases involving the following:

- (1) Suspicious, unexpected, or unusual deaths.
- (2) Sudden or violent deaths.
- (3) Deaths due to unknown or obscure causes or in any unusual manner.
- (4) Bodies found dead.
- (5) Deaths due to suspected suicide or homicide.
- (6) Deaths in which poison is suspected.
- (7) Any death from natural causes occurring in a hospital under twenty-four hours admission.
- (8) Deaths following an injury or accident either old or recent.
- (9) Deaths due to drowning, hanging, burns, electrocution, gunshot wounds, stabs or cutting, lightning, starvation, radiation, exposure, alcoholism, addiction, tetanus, strangulation, suffocation, or smothering.
- (10) Deaths due to trauma from whatever cause.
- (11) Deaths due to criminal means or by casualty.
- (12) Deaths in prison or while serving a sentence.
- (13) Deaths due to virulent contagious disease that might be caused by or cause a public hazard, including acquired immune deficiency syndrome.

Manners of Death After Death Investigation



Definitions:

Homicide: Death by the hands of another. Someone else caused the victims death.

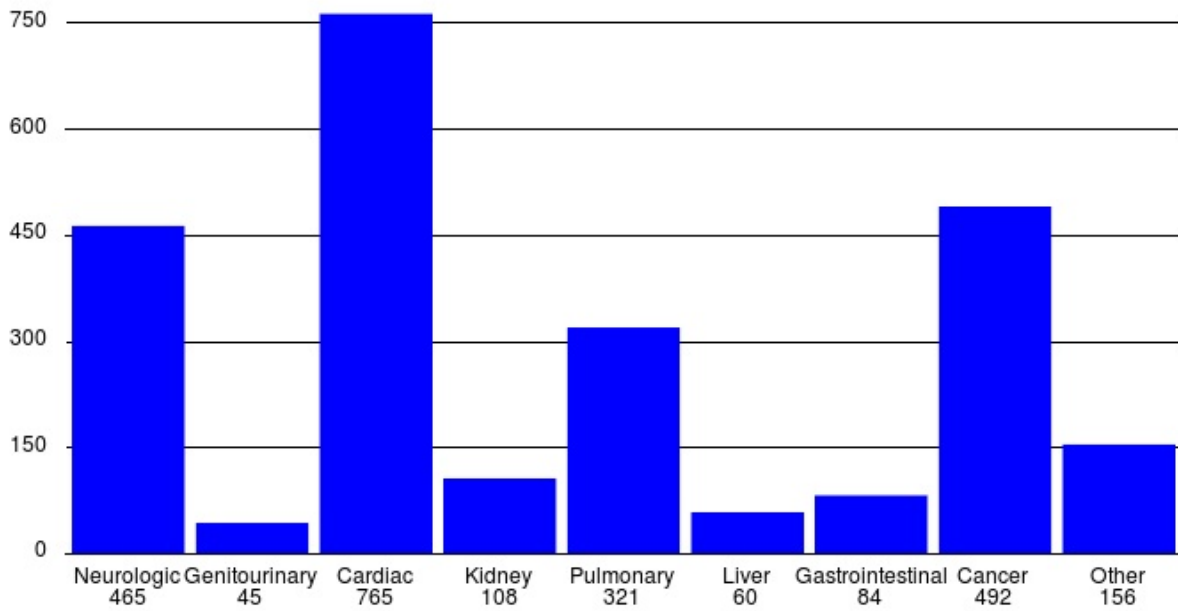
Suicide: Death as a result of intentional injury to self.

Natural: Deaths due to major disease process or aging.

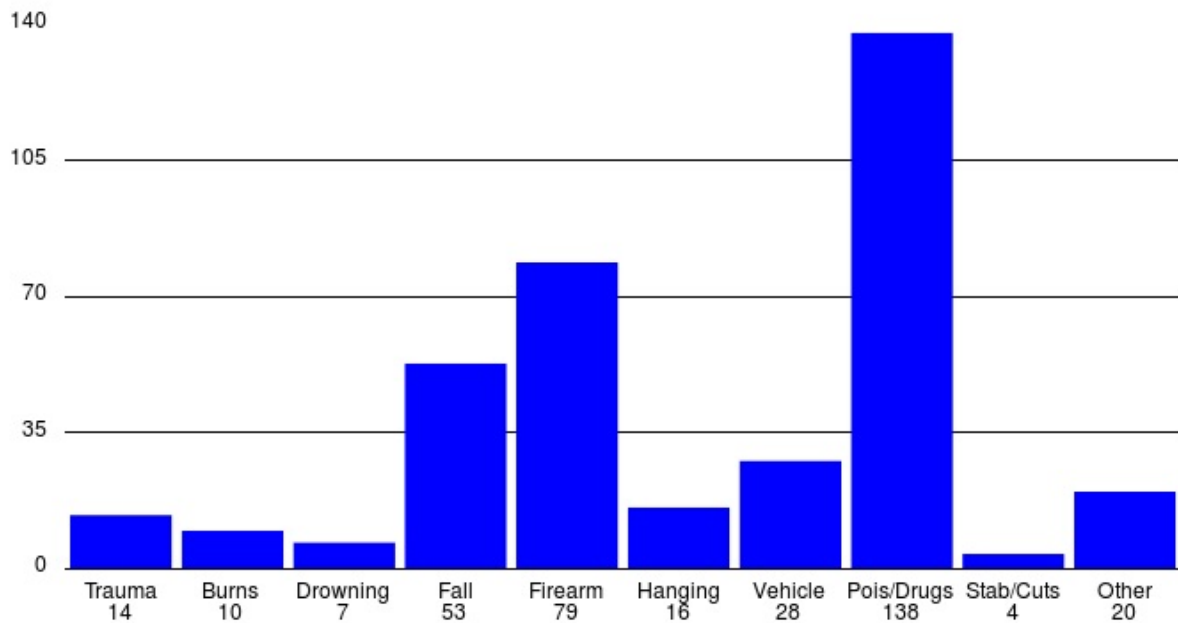
Undetermined: Insufficient information surrounding the death or when the cause of death is unknown.

Accident: Unintended and essentially unavoidable death.

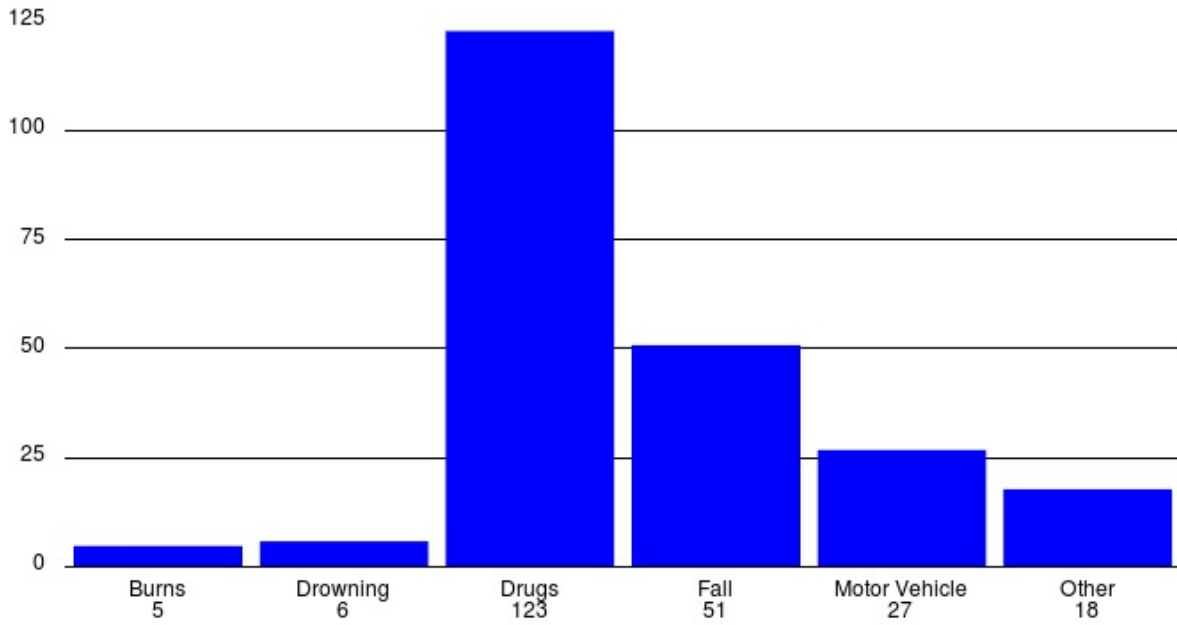
Deaths by Natural Causes



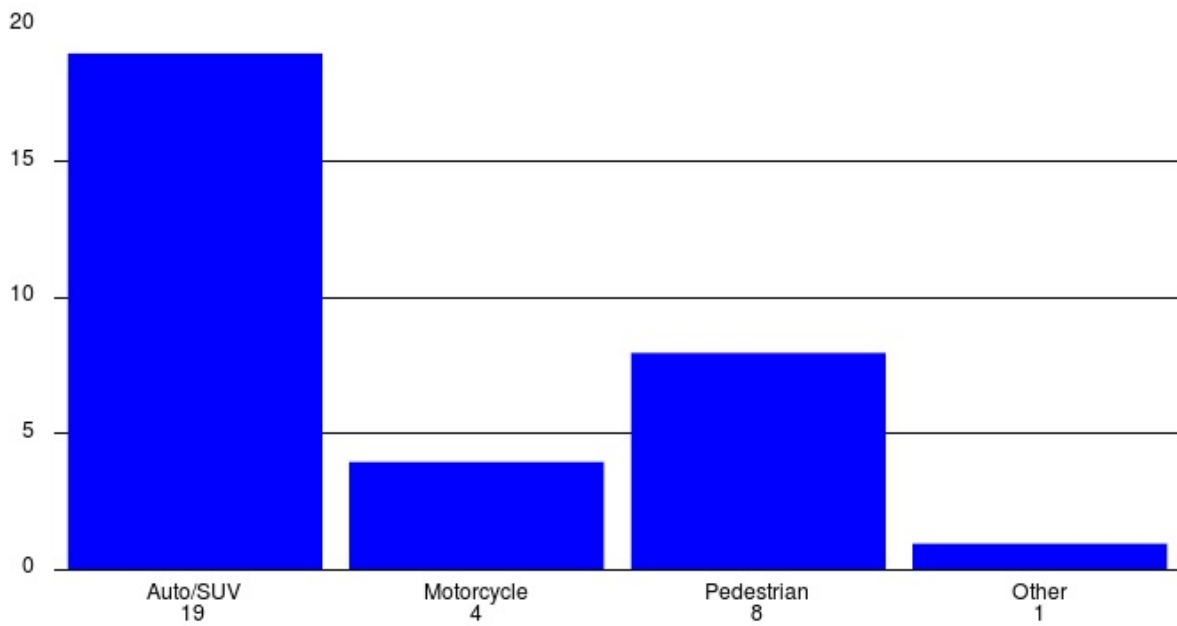
Deaths by Unnatural Causes



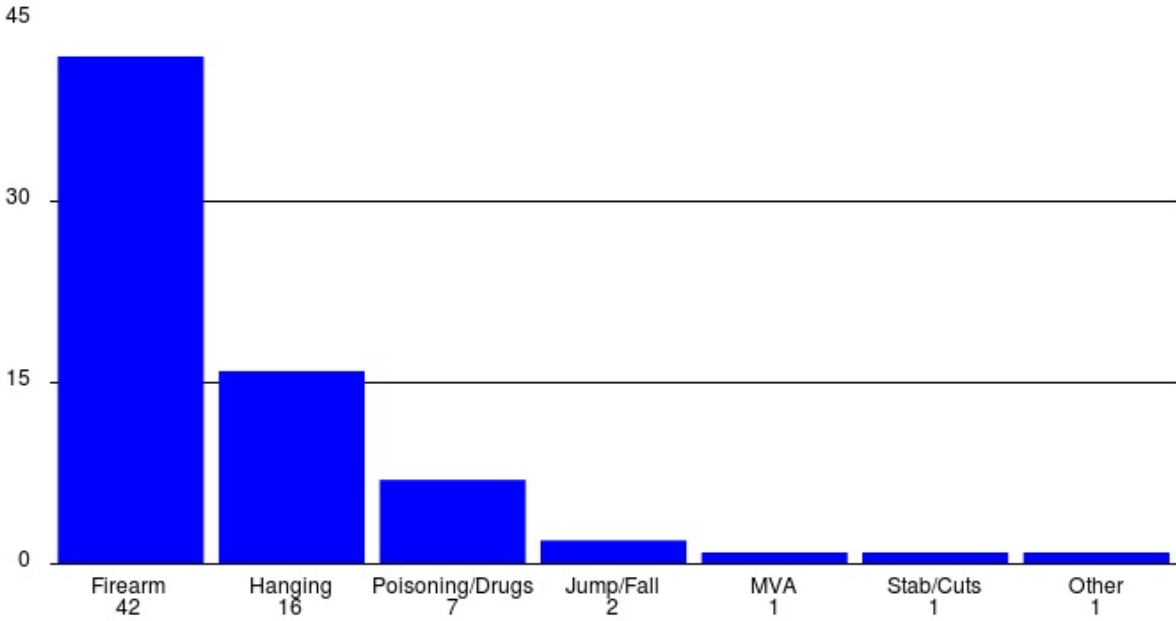
Accidental Deaths by Type



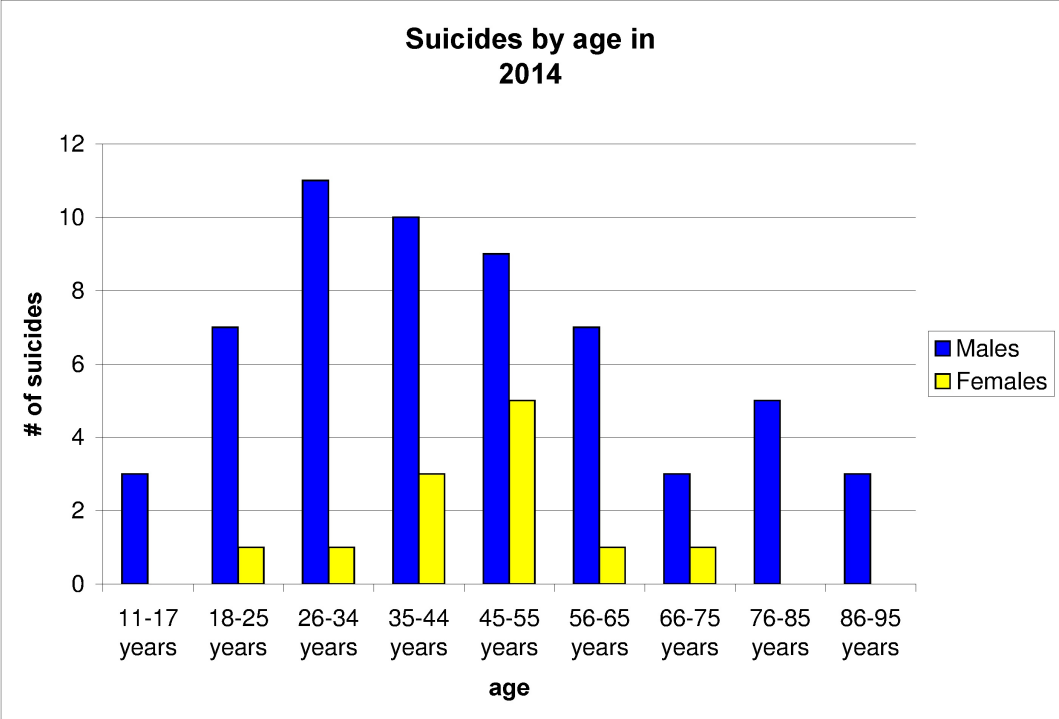
Accidental Deaths - Motor Vehicle Crashes



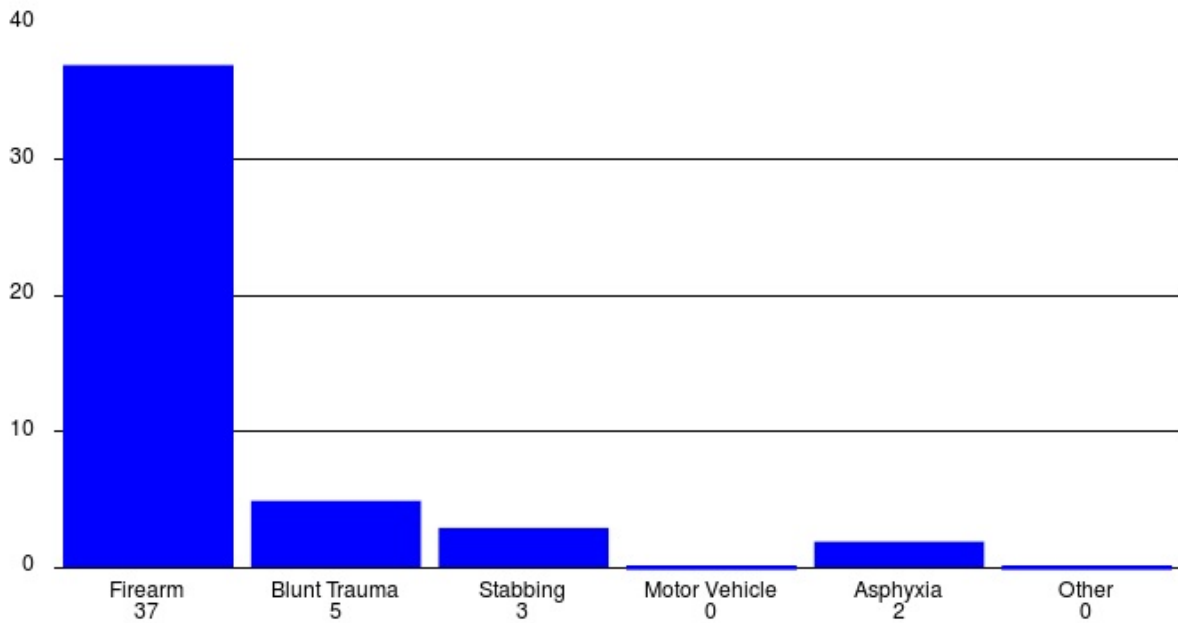
Suicide by Means



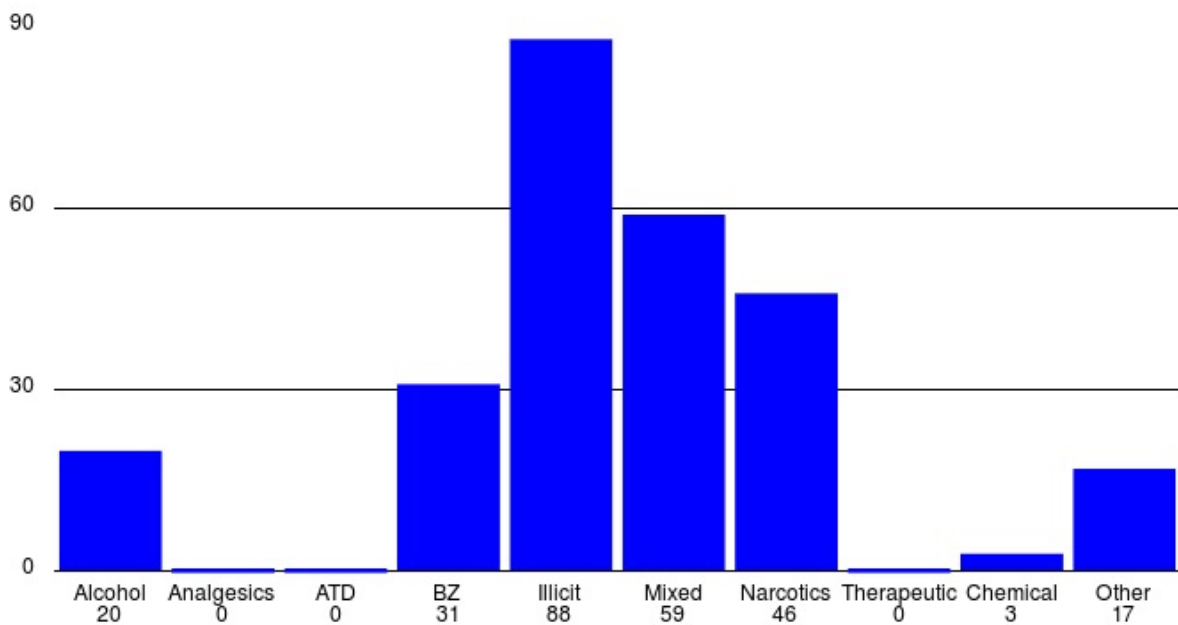
Suicides by Age



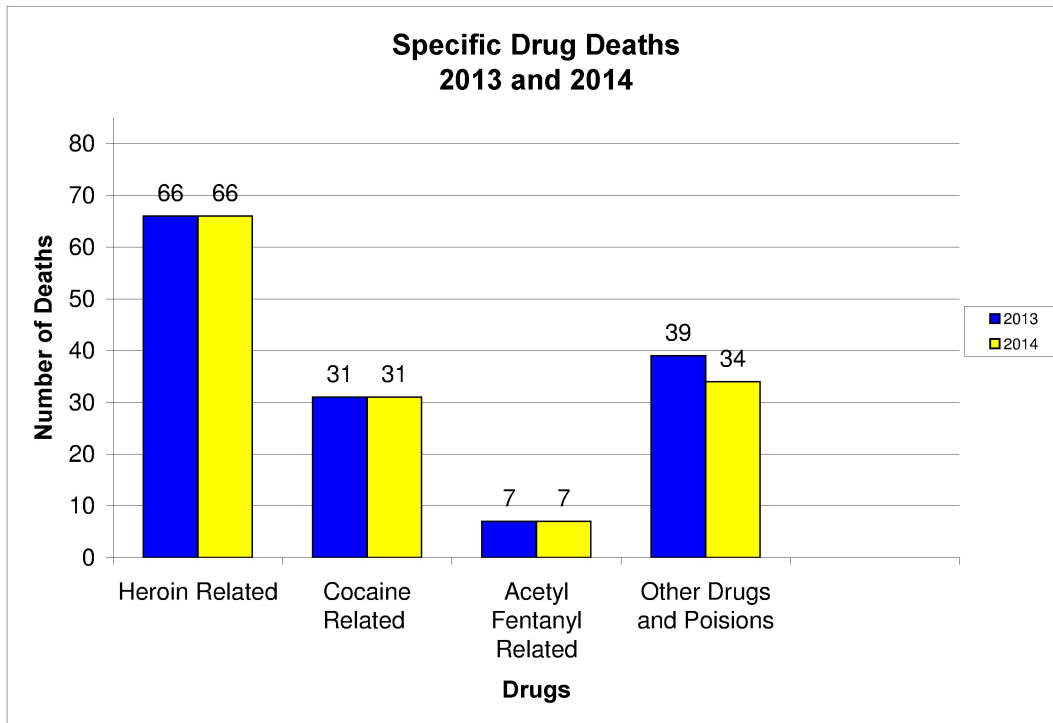
Homicide Deaths



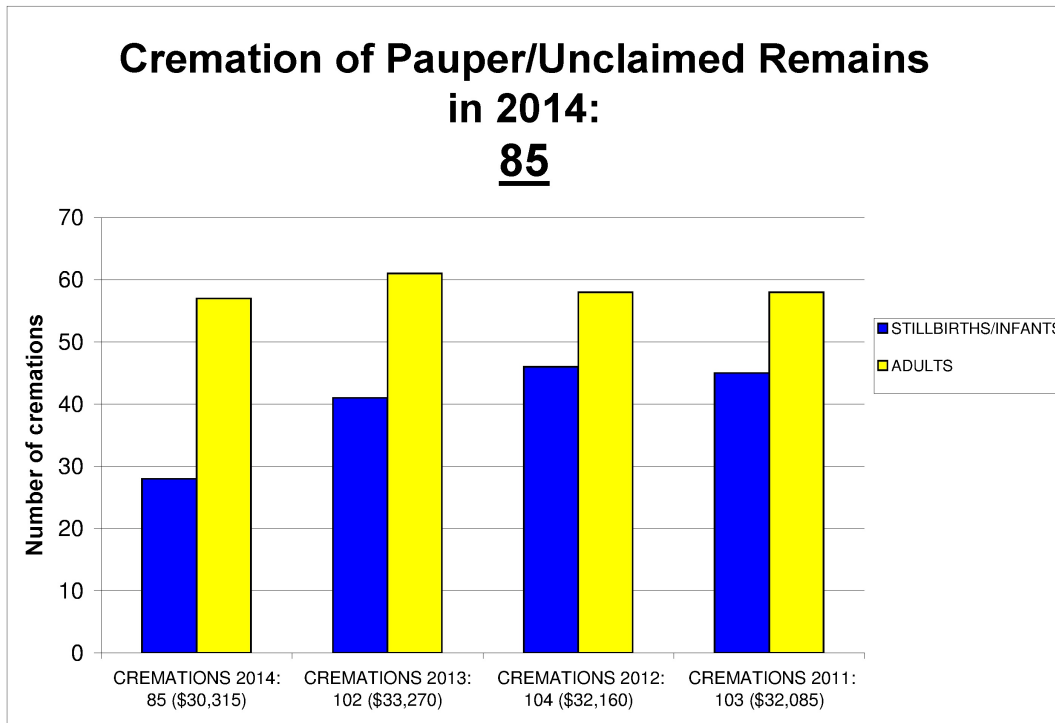
Drugs Contributing to Cause of Death



Specific Drug Related Deaths



Pauper/Unclaimed Remains Cremations



The Jefferson Parish Coroner's Office (JPCO) is required by law to bury or cremate all pauper, abandoned and unclaimed persons who died in Jefferson Parish. In accordance with the law, a procedure has been established by the JPCO to facilitate the necessary arrangements regarding the unclaimed remains. The JPCO maintains an agreement with a local funeral home to handle the final disposition of the remains.

Following notification of an unclaimed body in Jefferson Parish, it becomes the responsibility of the JPCO death investigator to initiate a diligent search for a family member or concerned party willing to claim the body. If after 30 days of death and the body is still unclaimed, the JPCO may dispose of the body in accordance with the law.

There has been an exponential increase in the number of unclaimed bodies in

Jefferson Parish. In 2014, 57 adults and 28 infant bodies were cremated as unclaimed, compared to 48 in 2001. On average, the death investigator will spend 3-5 days conducting a search for the next of kin, other family or any concerned party to claim the body.

Body Transportation Costs

2014: **567** body transfers costing \$111,220

2013: **558** body transfers costing \$108,860

2012: **507** body transfers costing \$101,000

Louisiana Organ Procurement Agency Statistics

7 organ donors saving **21** lives

54 tissue donors enhancing **3780** lives

Other Coroner Responsibilities

Mental Health: The Coroner is responsible for the involuntary commitment of those persons who are either mentally ill or suffering from substance abuse and are in need of immediate treatment to protect themselves or others from physical harm.

Sexual Assault Services: The Coroner or his designee shall examine all alleged victims of rape, carnal knowledge, sexual battery, incest and crime against nature when such cases are under police investigation.

Community Outreach Division Statistics

Community Outreach Programs

Teen Life Counts- Suicide Prevention Jan-May 2014/ JP Public Schools

Students- High	Classes	Referrals
1,423	51	173

Students- Middle	Classes	Referrals
376	11	76

S.O.S-Suicide Prevention Sept-Dec 2014/ JP Public Schools

Students- High	Classes	Referrals
1,095	39	253

Students- Middle	Classes	Referrals
841	15	52

Teens, Sex, and the Law Aug-Dec 2014/ JP Public Schools

Students- High	Classes
1,617	44

Students- Middle	Classes
819	20

Sexual Assault Department Statistics

Sexual Assault Department

	2013 Annual Total	2014 Annual Total
Children-Male	66	79
Children-Female	181	262
Adults-Female (Ages 17+)	34	27

Mental Health Department Statistics

Mental Health Department

	Jefferson Parish	Out of Parish	Total All Parishes
Order for Protective Custody (OPC)	371	4	375
Request for Coroner's Examination (PEC)	3,760	2,673	6,433
Coroner's Emergency Certificate (CEC)	1,856	1,429	3,285

Ten Year Perspective

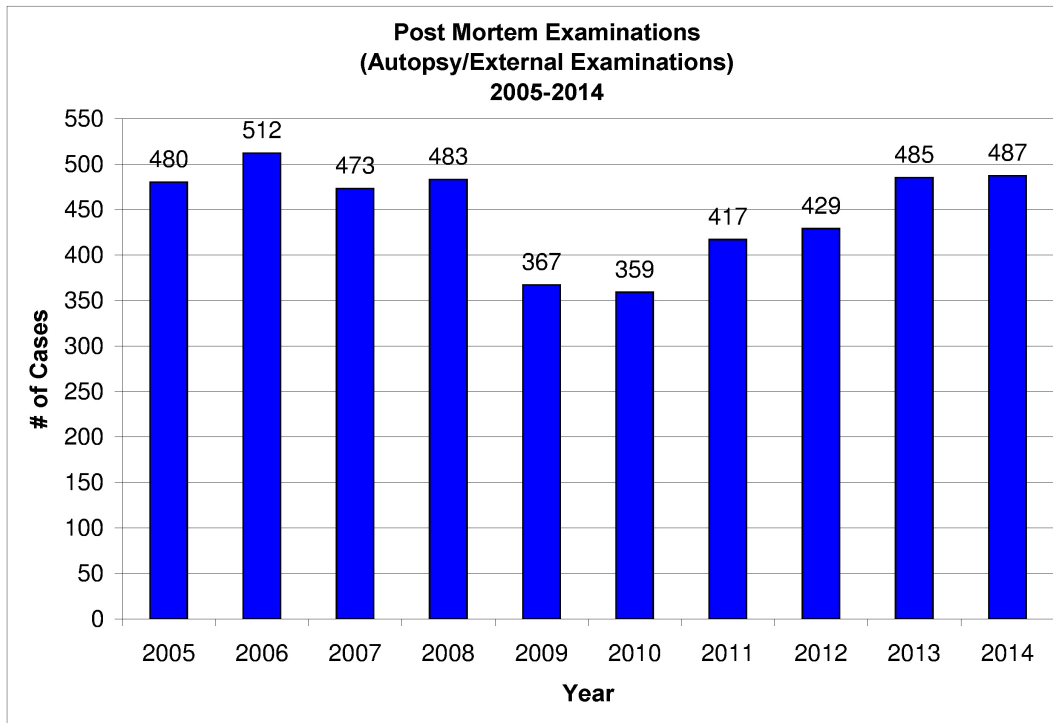
A ten year perspective on deaths investigated by the Jefferson Parish Coroner's Office is presented, illustrating data variation from year to year to provide trends over time.

Coroner Cases Cumulative Data (Past 10 Years)

* Exclusive of Motor Vehicle Crashes

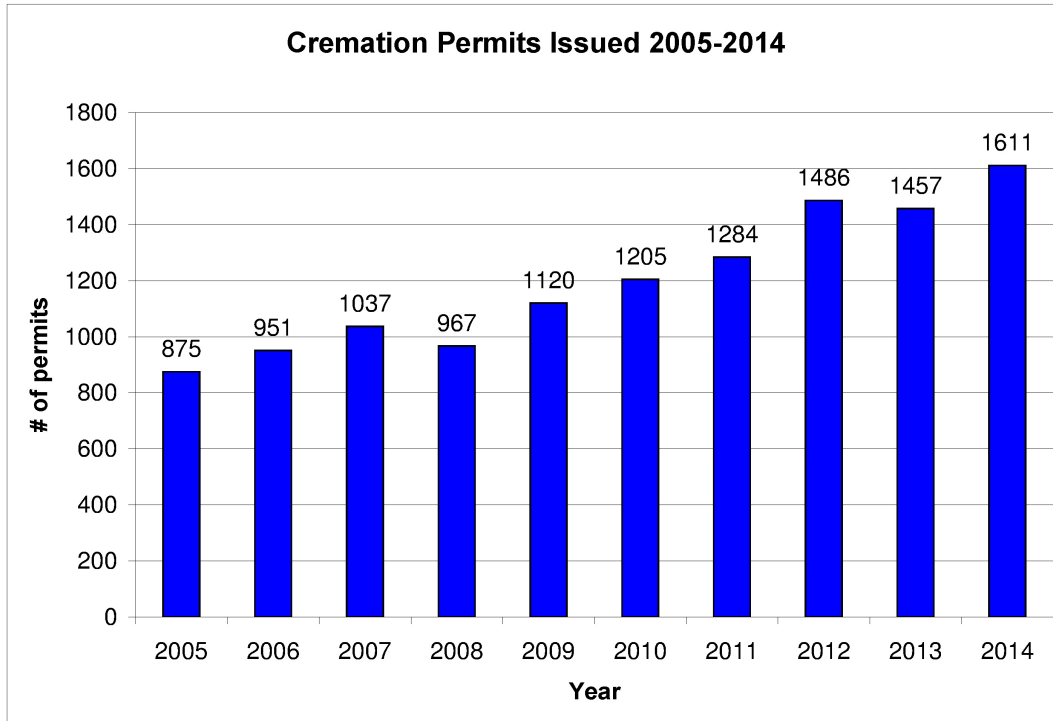
<u>Year</u>	<u>Natural</u>	<u>Accidents*</u>	<u>Traffic</u>	<u>Suicide</u>	<u>Homicide</u>	<u>Undetermined</u>
2005	2390	183	43	61	44	38
2006	2388	191	60	50	83	24
2007	2546	181	56	77	66	10
2008	2474	138	29	49	57	15
2009	2583	132	35	45	69	13
2010	2748	114	18	44	66	19
2011	2904	148	26	58	67	13
2012	3097	168	34	43	42	14
2013	2504	210	30	47	56	17
2014	<u>2528</u>	<u>201</u>	<u>27</u>	<u>70</u>	<u>47</u>	<u>17</u>
Total	26347	1671	357	543	597	179

Post Mortem Exams Performed 2005-2014



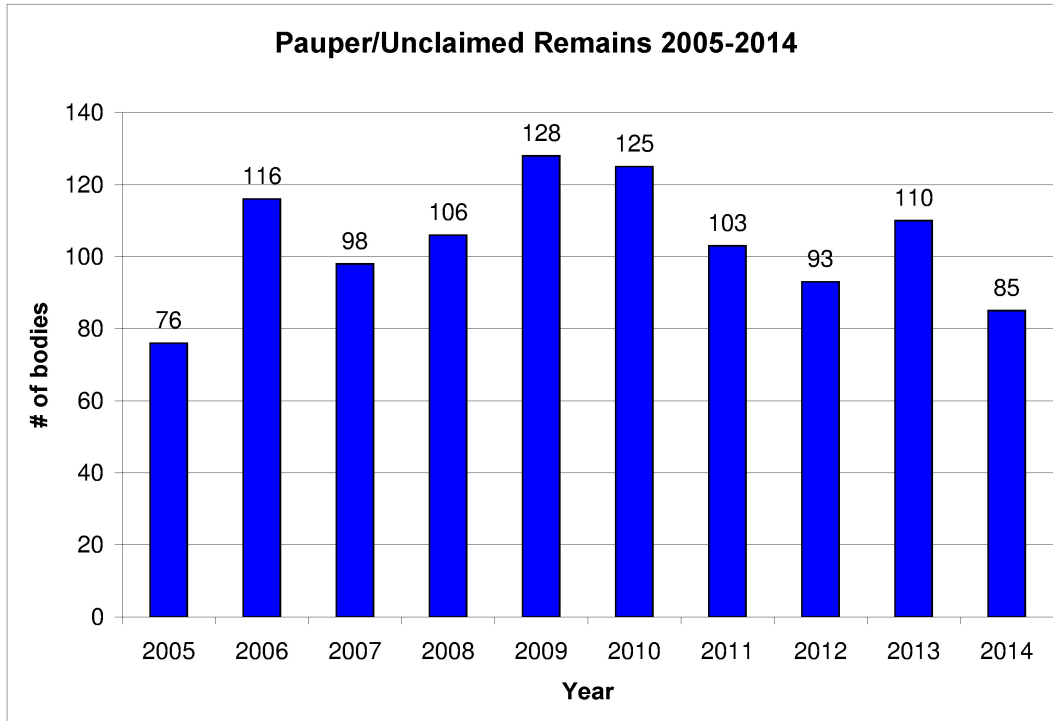
In 2014, 2889 cases were reported to the Jefferson Parish Coroner's Office and of those, 487 were autopsied. This graph depicts the number of post mortem exams performed over the last 10 years. External exams are performed where scene investigation, circumstances and medical history and the exam are sufficient to certify the death.

Cremation Permits Issued 2005-2014



In the state of Louisiana, as per LA R.S. 13:5716, the Coroner is charged with the investigation of death if the body is to be cremated. The investigation involves confirmation that the death certificate is appropriately executed and no further circumstances exist which may have contributed to the death. This involves interviews with medical personnel, families and/or a review of medical records. If the cause of death is unclear or falls under the jurisdiction of the Coroner, a post mortem exam and issuance of a revised death certificate may be required. The above graph illustrates the steady increase of cremation permits signed by the Coroner over the past 10 years.

Pauper/ Unclaimed Remains In Jefferson Parish 2005-2014



In the state of Louisiana, as per LA R.S. 13:5715, the Coroner is required by law to bury or cremate all pauper, abandoned and unclaimed remains who died in their Parish. The graph above depicts the number of burials/cremations of unclaimed remains performed by the Jefferson Parish Coroner's Office through the years 2005-2014.