



Kitsap County Coroner's Office



2014 Annual Report

Mission Statement

The mission of the Kitsap County Coroner's Office is to serve the living through the investigation of sudden, unexpected, unexplained, suspicious, and all violent deaths. Pursuant to RCW 68.50 it is the responsibility of the Coroner to assume jurisdiction over persons who come to their death suddenly, or where the death is caused by unnatural or unlawful means.

The Coroner and staff are here to serve the public, providing investigation of all deaths in Kitsap County. The investigation of the death allows the determination of cause and manner of death. Modern medicine and forensic science is applied to the death investigation process by a highly trained technical staff. The cause, manner, date and time of death along with identification and notification are determined by the investigation.

We are a check and balance system by representing those who can no longer represent themselves. These determinations are essential to our community in order that murder shall be recognized, the innocent shall be exonerated, legal proceedings will be provided with documented, sound and impartial medical evidence, and recognized threats to public health and safety will be revealed.

OUR MISSION IN A NUTSHELL...

- *Investigate thoroughly and professionally, the cause, manner, circumstances and mechanism of death in violent and unexpected deaths and in fatalities due to public health hazards*
 - *Provide credible, objective, truthful and scientifically sound Medicolegal testimony*
 - *Educate and train Medicolegal experts*
 - *Warn the public of preventable fatal risks*
 - *Treat bereaved families with respect, sensitivity and consideration*
 - *Engage in legal, ethical and meaningful research*
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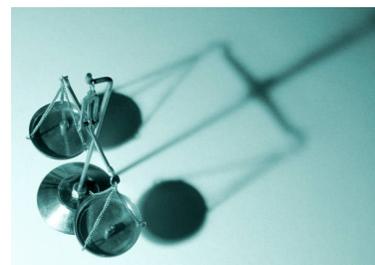
Explanation of Statistics

The information presented in this report is based on the investigational findings and the medical determinations of the Kitsap County Coroner's Office on cases which came under its jurisdiction during the calendar year 2014.

The Coroner and staff base their determination of cause and manner of death on the integration of data provided by law enforcement investigators and Deputies of the Kitsap County Coroner's Office, personal scene investigations, medical records, interviews of witnesses and physicians, autopsy findings and toxicology testing results of body fluids and tissues for alcohol, drugs of addiction, medications and toxic substances. Certain types of fatalities were analyzed in more detail, including homicidal deaths, traffic fatalities, suicides, SIDS and drowning.

NOTE

- This office does not perform Partial Autopsies, nor does it allow any hospital to perform autopsies for this office on Coroner's Cases.
- Organ and tissue agencies track the number of procurements from Kitsap County.



Jurisdiction and Responsibilities

Jurisdiction

The coroner has jurisdiction of bodies of deceased person in specific cases, unattended natural deaths, deaths by contagious diseases constituting public health hazard and non-natural deaths such as accidents, suicide, and homicide. It is a misdemeanor to not expeditiously notify the coroner of the location of a dead body coming under coroner's jurisdiction; bodies are not to be removed from location where found without coroner's authorization.

The 2000 US Census showed a population of 231,939 for Kitsap County and estimated a population for 2001 of 233,400. Kitsap County is comprised of 393 square miles in the Puget Sound area, the Kitsap County Coroner's Office has jurisdiction within these boundaries. The Kitsap County Coroner's Office works closely with the many law enforcement agencies within Kitsap County, i.e. the Kitsap County Sheriff's Office, the Tribal Police agencies, Federal Bureau of Investigation, National Transportation Safety Board, Naval Criminal Investigative Services, the Washington State Patrol, Bainbridge Island, Poulsbo, Bremerton and Port Orchard Police Departments.

Responsibilities

The coroner is an elected official whose main function is to inquire into the manner and cause of death of persons within his/her jurisdiction. These deaths are of concern to the public health, safety and welfare. The coroner inquires into all deaths impartially. After a thorough investigation, the coroner determines the cause and manner of death, which are reasonably accurate and acceptable for the purpose of Vital Statistics.

An accurate determination of cause and manner of death is essential to our society, the innocent will be exonerated, murder will be recognized and criminal and civil court proceedings will be provided with documented sound, and impartial medical evidence.

A coroner or medical examiner is required to certify cause of death according to his/her best knowledge and belief within two (2) days after being presented with death certificate. The cause of death, and the manner and mode in which death occurred, as certified by the coroner is the legally accepted cause and manner of death. The RCW states that if the death occurred without medical attendance the coroner shall be notified, however in Kitsap County an ordinance was enacted June 20th, 1988 requiring all deaths in Kitsap County be reported to the Coroner's Office.

A coroner or coroner/prosecutor may hold an inquest if suspicion that death was unnatural, violent or resulted from unlawful means. The coroner has the power to subpoena witnesses and must examine every person who has any knowledge of the facts. An inquest is a judicial inquiry. In criminal law the term usually refers to an investigation on the cause of sudden or violent death of a person, or of the death of a prisoner while in jail. The inquest is conducted by a coroner other qualified officials and a jury. If foul play is suspected as the cause of death, the coroner and the jury may investigate to determine the identity of the murderer. Witnesses may be summoned and compelled to give testimony. If the testimony warrants a verdict known as a coroner's verdict, the jury against one or more individuals may return a charge of homicide. Persons so charged are held for indictment by a grand jury.

Summary of 2014

There were a total of 2,000 deaths reported to the Kitsap County Coroner's Office in 2014.

- **Jurisdictional Cases:** There were 416 jurisdictional cases investigated by the Kitsap County Coroner's Office, Those 416 deaths are classified by manner of death:

Homicides	5
Undetermined	15
Traffic	15
Suicide	36
Accident	73
Natural	246
Out of County Notifications	22

- **No Jurisdiction Assumed (NJA):** There were 1,584 no jurisdiction assumed cases reported.
- **This office had no unidentified, Exhumed or Unclaimed deceased persons.**

Forensic Autopsies/External Exams/Toxicology:

<i>Forensic Autopsies/External Exams</i>	153
Forensic Autopsy	104
Forensic External Examination	49
Cases submitted to WSP TOX Lab	161
Crime Lab	1

- **Found Bones:** Found bones received by the Kitsap County Coroner's Office from citizens or law enforcement in Kitsap County. The determination of human or non-human is made by the forensic pathologist, forensic anthropologist or trained personnel of the Kitsap County Coroner's' Office.

<i>Found Bones</i>	4
Human	0
Non-Human	4

