

**WHATCOM COUNTY MEDICAL EXAMINER  
1500 NORTH STATE STREET  
BELLINGHAM, WA 98225**

**2011 ANNUAL REPORT**

During 2011 the Whatcom County Medical Examiner's office assumed jurisdiction in 89 death investigations that involved forensic autopsies, toxicological examinations, viewing and summary reporting. In addition, 150 other additional cases were reported and investigated and no jurisdiction was assumed (NJA).

Local agencies brought miscellaneous bones on three occasions to the Medical Examiner to determine if they were of human origin.

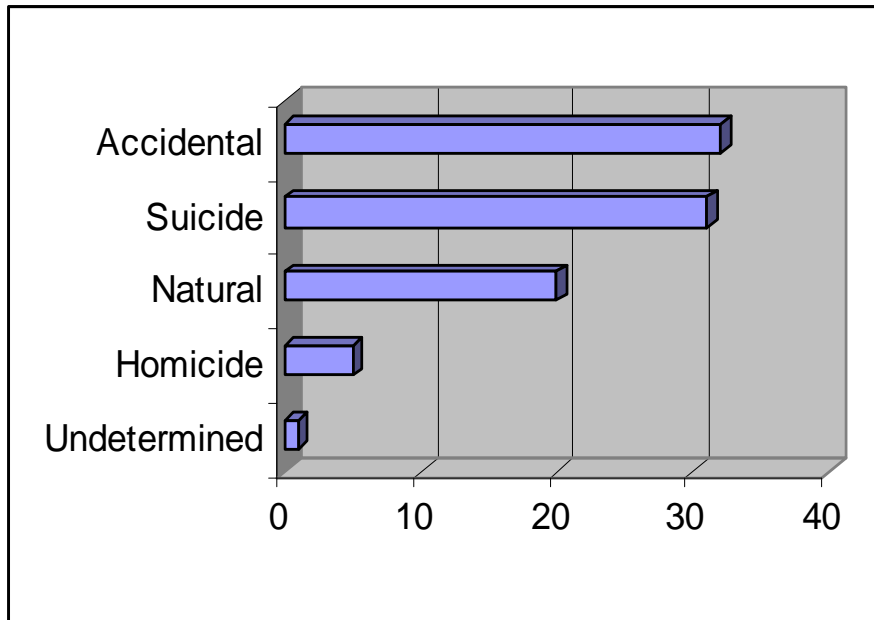
Teaching and public relations are also an important part of the Medical Examiner's office. Consulting was ongoing with the fire and police departments of the county and St. Joseph's Hospital. In addition, college and high school classes toured the morgue facility. The Medical Examiner also represented the office on numerous occasions to various civic organizations and gave multiple lectures.

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**Gary Goldfogel, MD  
Whatcom County Medical Examiner**

During 2011 the Whatcom County Medical Examiner's Office conducted 89 forensic death investigations as stated on the previous page. The following statistics and graphs show the breakdown of the various causes of the deaths and the age and sex of those who died.

## Whatcom County MEO Death Investigations 2011



The causes of death shown in the above table are further broken down and displayed on the following pages.

## **ACCIDENTAL:**

There were 32 total investigated accidental deaths of which 22 were male and 10 female. The cause of death was as follows: Drugs (19), Traffic (9), Drowning (2) and Fall from height (1).

By age, approximately 13% were between 16-19, 19% between 20-29, 13% between 30-39, 25% between 40-49, 19% between 50-59, 9% between 60-69 and 3% between 70-79 years of age.

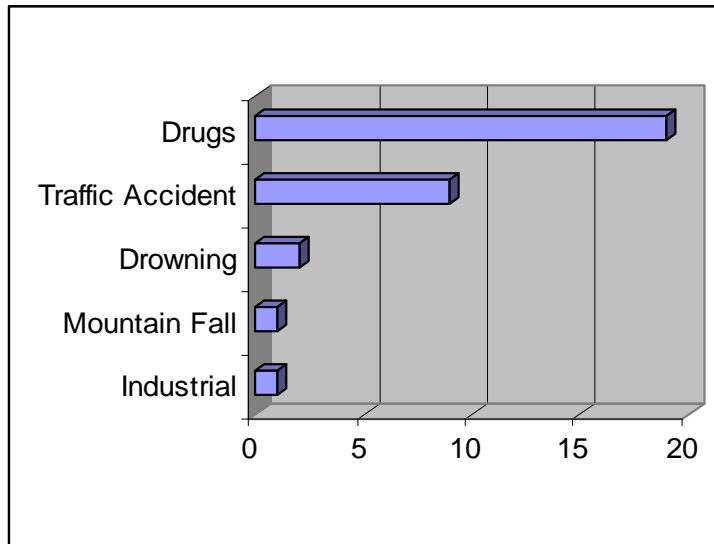
In the nine traffic deaths, alcohol was present 36% of the time with an average blood alcohol concentration of 0.17 gm%. Seatbelts were not worn in 22% of the deaths. Helmets were worn in both motorcycle deaths. One of the traffic deaths involved a pedestrian with a blood alcohol of 0.15 gm%. In the traffic deaths, hydrocodone was found one time and marijuana twice.

In the 19 drug overdose deaths, heroin was present 42% of the time, morphine 16%, methadone 26%, oxycodone 16%, hydrocodone 16%, cocaine 16%, benzodiazepines 26%, marijuana 26%, antidepressants 5% and amphetamine 5%.

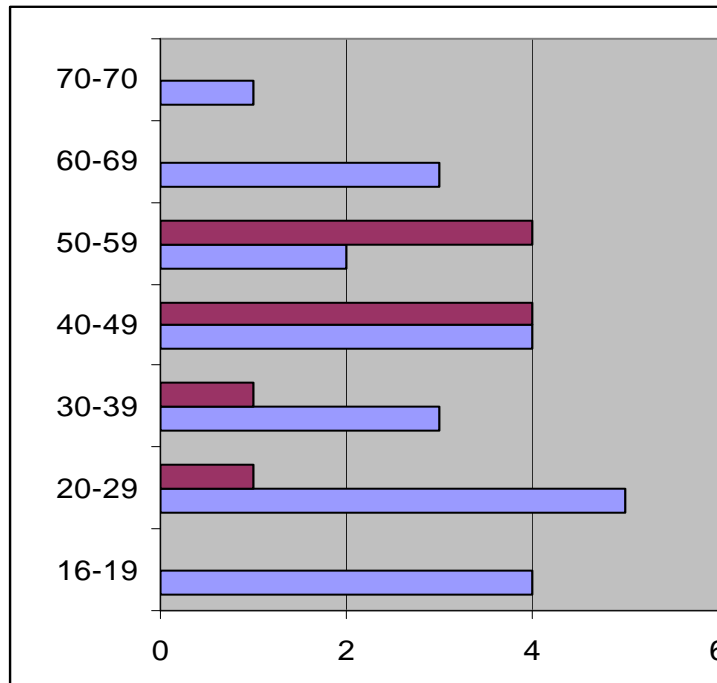
In the two drowning deaths, alcohol was present one time with a blood alcohol concentration of 0.13 gm%.

The one industrial death involved a roller/compactor leaving the roadway and going over a hillside.

## Accidental Deaths



## Accidental Deaths by Age and Sex



\* Blue bars are male and red bars are female.

## **SUICIDE:**

There were 31 total investigated suicide deaths of which 21 were male and 10 female. The cause of death was as follows: Gunshot (11), Hanging (9), Drugs (4), Asphyxia (3), Jumping/Fall (1), Cutting (1), Exposure (1) and Drinking antifreeze (1).

By age, approximately 13% were between 16-19, 29% between 20-29, 13% between 30-39, 13% between 40-49, 22% between 50-59 and 9% between 60-69 years of age.

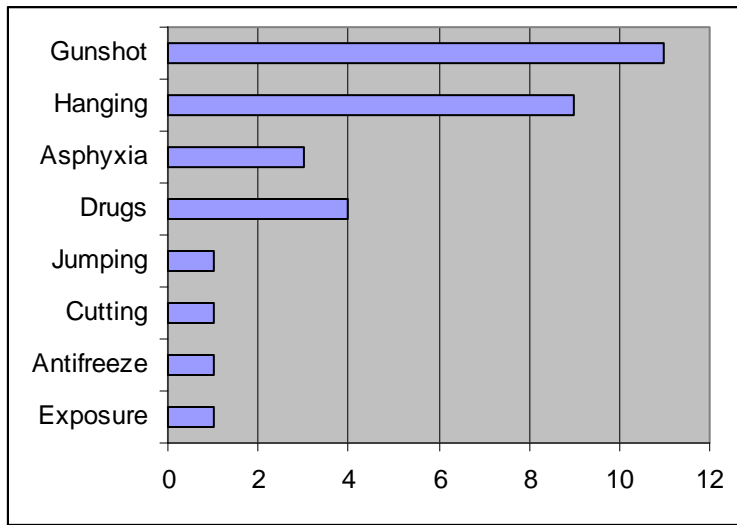
Alcohol was positive in 32% of all suicide deaths with an average blood alcohol reading of 0.09 gm%.

In the four drug overdose deaths, fluoxetine, flecainide, hydrocodone, antidepressants or benzodiazepines were used.

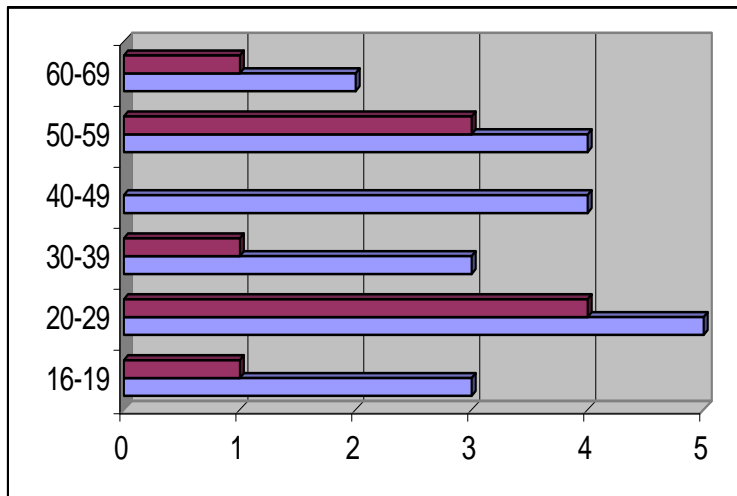
In the 11 gunshot suicides, handguns were used 82% of the time and shotguns 18%. Alcohol was present in 45% of the gunshot victims with an average reading of 0.14 gm%.

The three asphyxia deaths involved auto exhaust, nitrogen gas or natural gas inhalation.

## Suicide Deaths by Mechanism of Injury



## Suicide Deaths by Age and Sex



\*Blue bars are male and red bars female.

## **NATURAL:**

There were 20 total investigated natural deaths of which 15 were male and 5 female. The cause of death was as follows: Heart (14), Stroke (1), Seizure (1), Obesity (1), Flu Type-A (1), Sepsis (1) and Pulmonary Embolism (1).

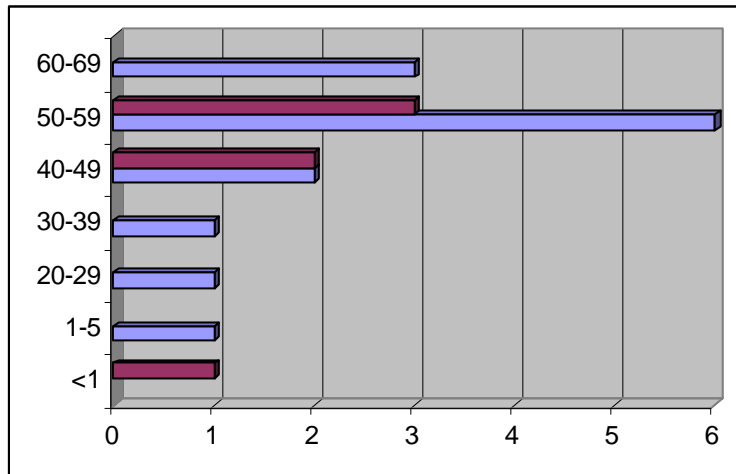
Alcohol was present in 25% of all natural deaths with an average blood alcohol concentration of 0.16 gm%.

By age, approximately 5% were less than one year old, 5% between 1-5, 5% between 20-29, 5% between 30-39, 20% between 40-49, 45% between 50-59 and 15% between 60-69 years of age.

### **Natural Deaths by Cause**



## Natural Deaths by Age and Sex



\*Blue bars are male and red bars are female.

## HOMICIDE:

There were five homicide cases: Three by gunshot, one by stabbing and one by physical assault. Four were male and one female. There was alcohol in 25% of all the victims with an average blood alcohol concentration of 0.09 gm%.

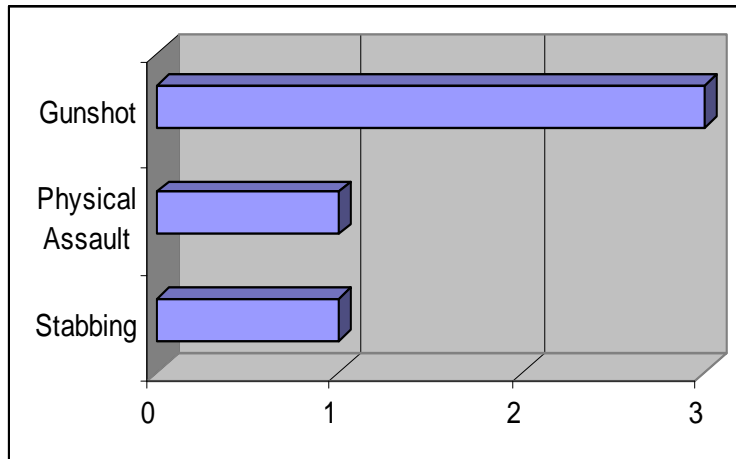
In the gunshot deaths, two used handguns and one used a shotgun.

Drugs present were oxycodone, methamphetamine or marijuana.

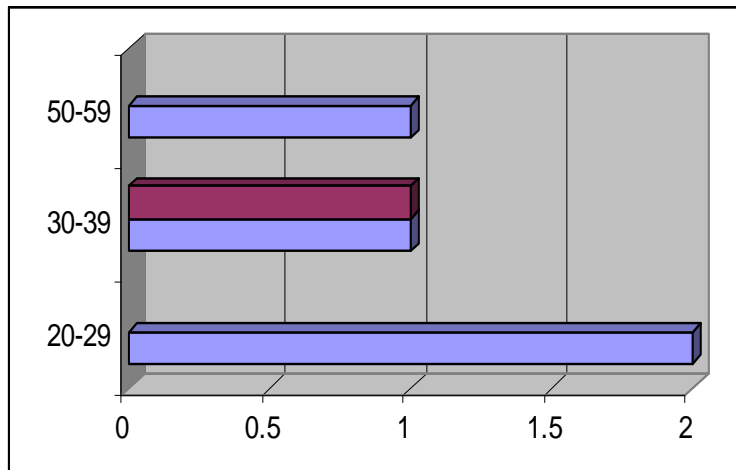
By age, approximately 40% were between 20-29, 40% between 30-39 and 20% between 50-59 years of age.



## Homicide Deaths by Mechanism of Injury



## Homicide Deaths by Age and Sex



\*Blue bars are male and red bars are female.

## **UNDETERMINED:**

There was one investigated death whose manner of death was listed as undetermined. It was a 40 year old female found partially decomposed in her residence.