



2023 ANNUAL REPORT

Texas County Coroner's Office
Marie Lasater, MSN, F-ABMDI
Coroner



Mission Statement

The mission of the Texas County Coroner's office is to provide a thorough and unbiased death investigation for all deaths occurring or originating in Texas County. The coroner is on call 24 hours a day, every day of the year and is fully accountable to the citizens of Texas County. An essential part of the coroner's duties includes being accessible to family members of the deceased, assisting them not only at the time of death, but in the months following for any matters that may arise. Forensic sciences are ever evolving, and continuing education is an absolute necessity. The Texas County Coroners Office seeks out education opportunities each year to bring the latest information in the forensic community back to ours.

The Coroner serves the jurisdictional region of Texas County, covering 1,179 square miles, and a population of 24031 as of the 2022 data. The jurisdictional area includes the South Central Correctional Center in Licking, holding 1500 offenders.

Deaths shall be reported and investigated by the coroner when any person dies as a result of: Violence by homicide, suicide, or accident; Criminal abortion, including those self-induced; some unforeseen sudden occurrence and the deceased had not been attended by a physician during the thirty-six hour period preceding the death; in any unusual or suspicious manner; any injury or illness while in custody of the law or while an inmate in a public institution; the death of a child under the age of eighteen years old, and eligible to receive a certificate of live birth; any resident of a residential care facility who dies at the facility; and when death occurs outside a licensed health facility.

The Office of the County Coroner is established by the Constitution of the State of Missouri. The Coroner is elected to serve by the citizens of Texas County for a term of 4 years.

The Coroner's Office is a separate and independent division of the Texas County Government and is funded through the Texas County General Fund.

The Coroner recognizes the tragedy surrounding an untimely death and performs investigations, in part, to assist the grieving family who are often seeking answers as to cause and manner of death. A complete forensic investigation provides for the expeditious settling of insurance claims and estates, as well the implementation of civil and criminal actions. Questions which seem irrelevant in the initial hours after death can become significant in the following months. The surviving family and general public can have the peace of mind that a complete investigation was done.

The Coroner works in cooperation with the law enforcement community, but conducts a separate and unbiased investigation.

Although criminal death investigations constitute a small portion of deaths investigated by the Coroner, these deaths are studied in great detail because of the issues and legal consequences involved. In this way, the criminal justice system is offered the best support. The public health dimension of the Coroner's function is designed to isolate and identify causes of sudden unexpected death.



Impact of Covid-19 on Coroner's Duties:

Revised Statutes of Missouri, RSMo Section 191.703 issues the directive: "Death of patient with infectious or contagious disease, notification to funeral director or coroner. — A licensed health care facility that treats a patient having HIV or HBV infection or any other reportable infectious or contagious disease as defined by the department of health and senior services shall notify the funeral establishment personnel, coroner or medical examiner involved of such disease prior to the removal of the patient, when deceased, from the licensed health care facility. Notification shall be conducted in a manner that protects the confidentiality of the deceased patient.



Duties Of The Coroner

The Coroner's Office is a statutory office, which is mandated to establish the cause and manner of death. The manner of death refers to the circumstances in which the cause of death arose (suicide, natural causes, accident and homicide).

Other Duties:

- ▶ Operate efficient Coroner's Office
- ▶ Prepare a budget for income and expenditures
- ▶ To be Conservator of Peace (throughout his/her county)
- ▶ To execute process when the Sheriff is disqualified (when sheriff is a party)
- ▶ To perform duties of Sheriff when office is vacant (by death or otherwise)
- ▶ To hold Coroner's Inquest/Coroner's Jury
- ▶ To issue Warrant to Summon Coroner's Jury (Coroner Inquest)
- ▶ Coroner to administer oath to jurors
- ▶ Coroner to issue subpoenas (witnesses)
- ▶ Order postmortem examination (autopsy)
- ▶ Certify cause and manner of death (death certificate)
- ▶ Order blood sample test for alcohol and drug content (all motor vehicle fatalities)
- ▶ Report toxicology results in writing to Missouri State Highway Patrol
- ▶ Procure organ donations (procurement of cadaver organ and tissue donation)

As your Coroner, I have assumed the following additional duties:

- ▶ Insure rapid response times to all calls.
- ▶ Fully investigate any Covid-19 related deaths, including confirmatory testing with Sars C0-V2 nucleocapsid antigen.
- ▶ Provide for post mortem pet placement in the event of an "orphaned" animal.
- ▶ Comprehensive testing in all suspected drug overdoses.
- ▶ Assist families in every way possible after the loss of a family member, and procure additional resources as needed.
- ▶ Perform influenza testing on decedents as indicated with positive results reported to the Texas County Health Department



Coroner Goals

The following goals for 2023 have been accomplished:

- 01)** Maintained "Fellow" status and continued certification by American Board of Medicolegal Death Investigators.
- 02)** Presented at the American Academy of Forensic Scientists in Orlando, Florida in February of 2023. Topic: The Effect of Covid 19 on a Rural Missouri County.
- 03)** Obtained over \$7,258.00 in monies from grants deposited to the general revenue.
- 04)** Upgraded to full member of the American Board of Forensic Scientists.
- 05)** Appointed to the Governor's Commission on Coroner Standards and Training.

► 2024 GOALS

- 01)** Obtain Texas County Coroner office accreditation by the American Board of Medicolegal Death Investigators.
- 02)** Present at the upcoming conference of American Academy of Forensic Scientists in Denver, Colorado in February of 2024. Topic: Xylazine: An Emerging Cause of Death in Correctional Facilities.
- 03)** Continue to pursue grant opportunities with priority of funding for toxicology and a digital x-ray machine to minimize autopsy expense.
- 04)** Hold additional classes open to the community and surrounding counties regarding death investigation.
- 05)** Continue toxicological surveillance of substance use contributing to death at the County Level.



2023 Cases

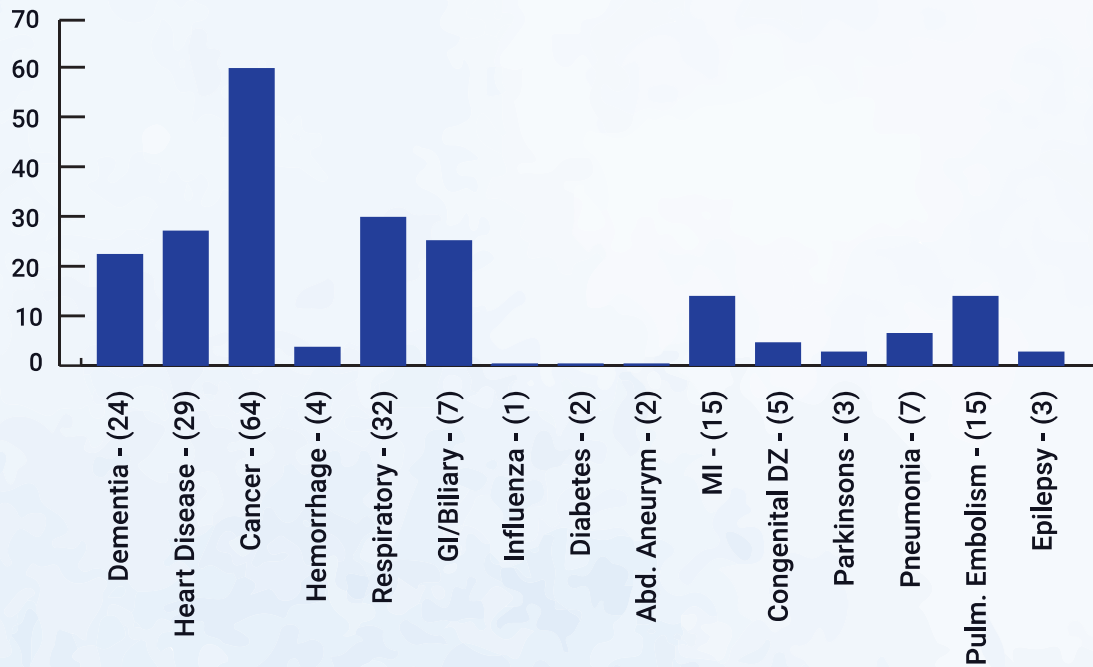
TOTAL CASES:	296
SCENE RESPONSES:	87
HOSPICE/NURSING HOME:	122
AUTOPSIED CASES:	13
TOXICOLOGY CASES:	46
SARS CO-V2 NUCLEOCAPSID ANTIGEN TESTS DECEASED	5
TRANSPORTS:	12
2023 MILEAGE:	6126
MORGUE USED:	9
EXTERNAL EXAMS:	92
DONOR REFERRALS:	1
ORGAN DONORS:	0
TISSUE DONORS:	6
WHOLE BODY DONORS:	2
EXHUMATIONS:	0
UNIDENTIFIED:	0
UNCLAIMED:	0
MILITARY INTERMENTS: (UNCLAIMED VETERANS)	0

► MANNERS OF DEATH:

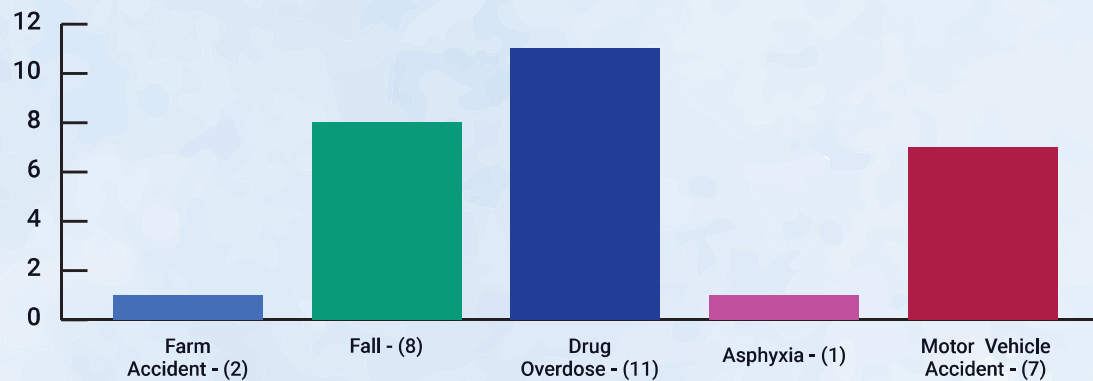
Natural:	254
Accidental:	28
Homicide:	6
Suicide:	6
Undetermined:	2



2023 Natural Deaths

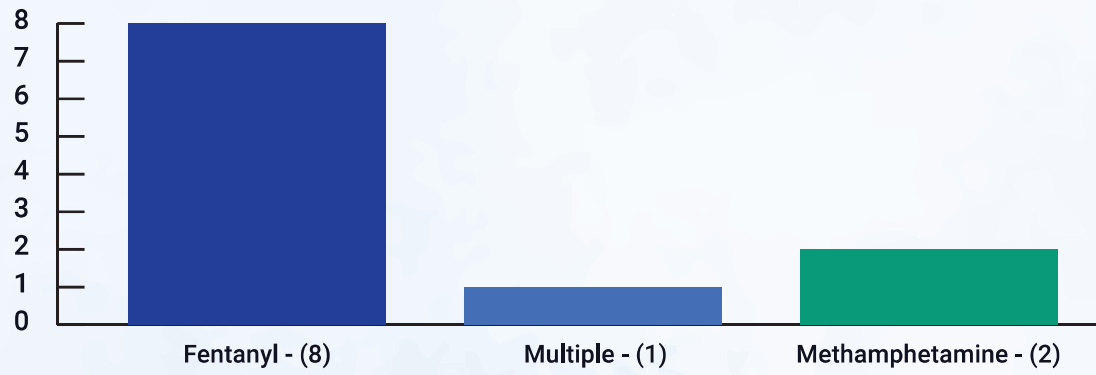


2023 Accidents





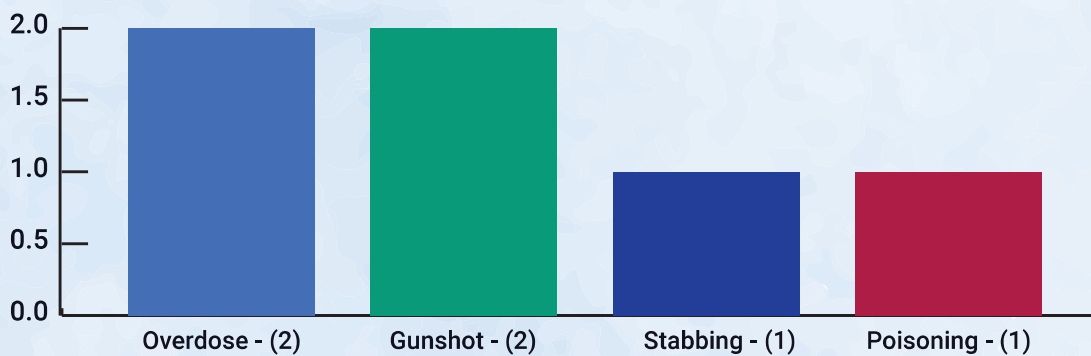
Drugs involved in Overdose Deaths



Note: 7 of the Fentanyl deaths occurred at South Central Correctional Center.

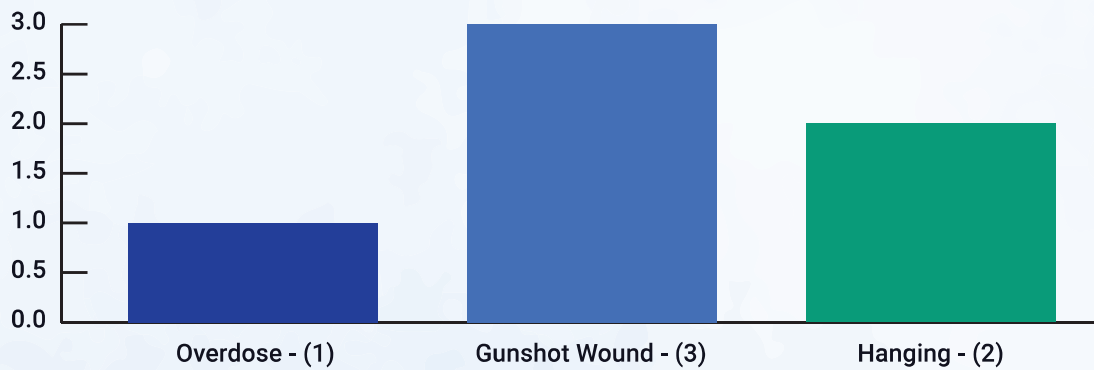


2023 Homicides

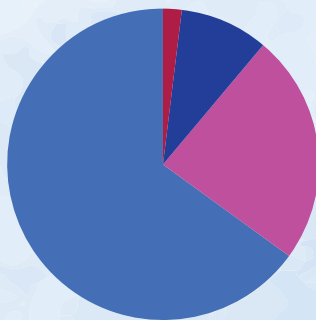




2023 Suicides

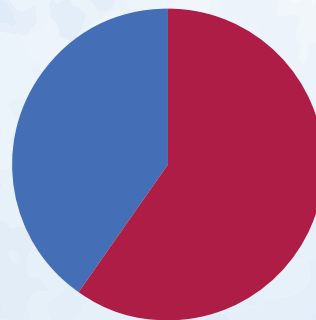


Age at Death



0-18	6
19-45	27
46-70	71
70+	192

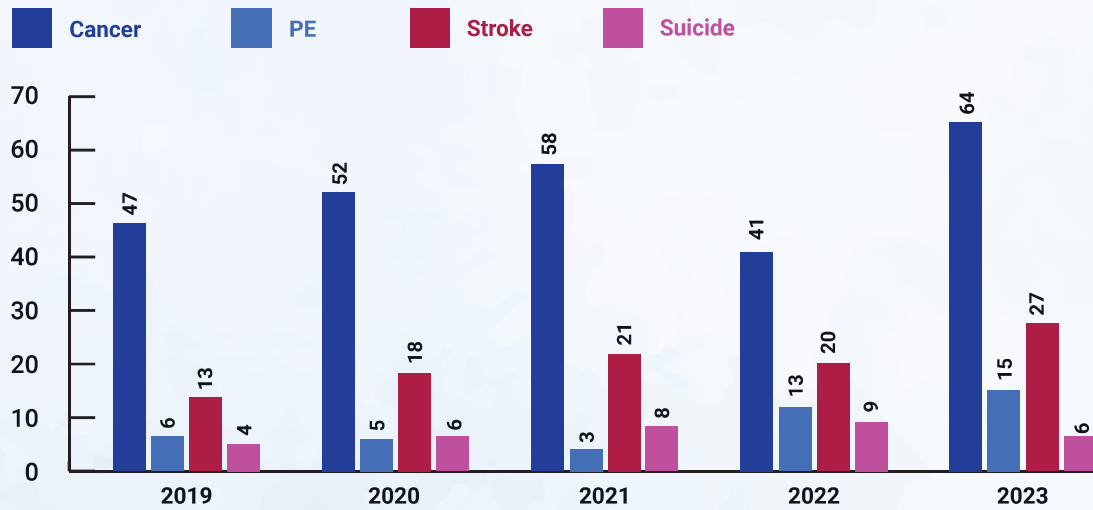
Gender at Death



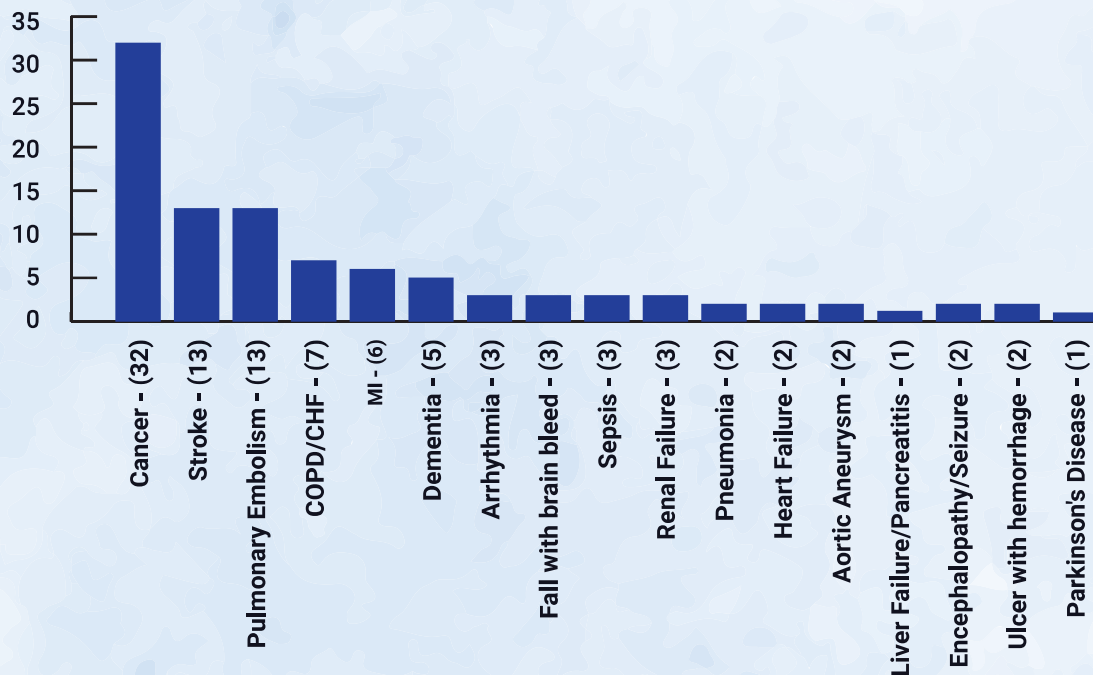
Male	177
Female	119



Overages Seen With Increase in Death Rate



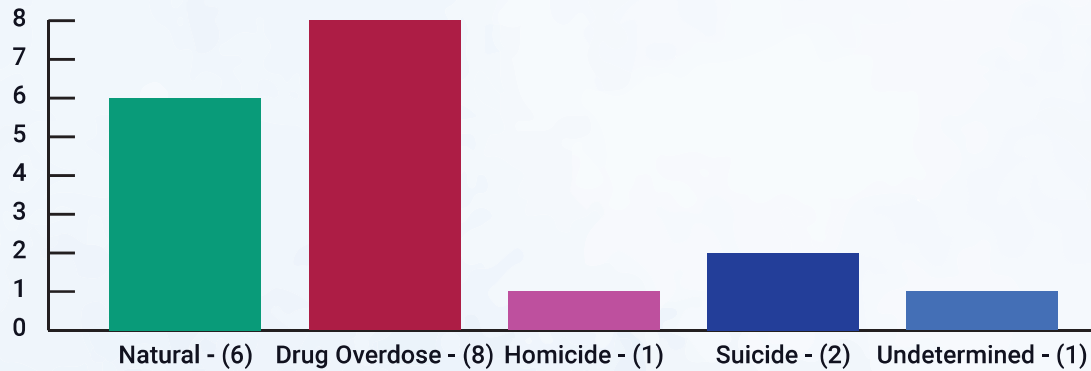
2023 Causes Of Death in Multi-Vaccinated Persons





Manners of Death

South Central Correctional Center 2023



Despite gradually declining population, recent years have shown a 40% increase in Texas County coroner cases.



Texas County Coroner Cases 2017-2023



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In God We Trust