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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 2014. 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, D-ABMDI	Deputy Coroner
Brian Clark	Deputy Coroner
Jody Hudson	Deputy Coroner
Shaye Schottel	Deputy Coroner

## General Statistics (Including deaths transferred to the county of origin)

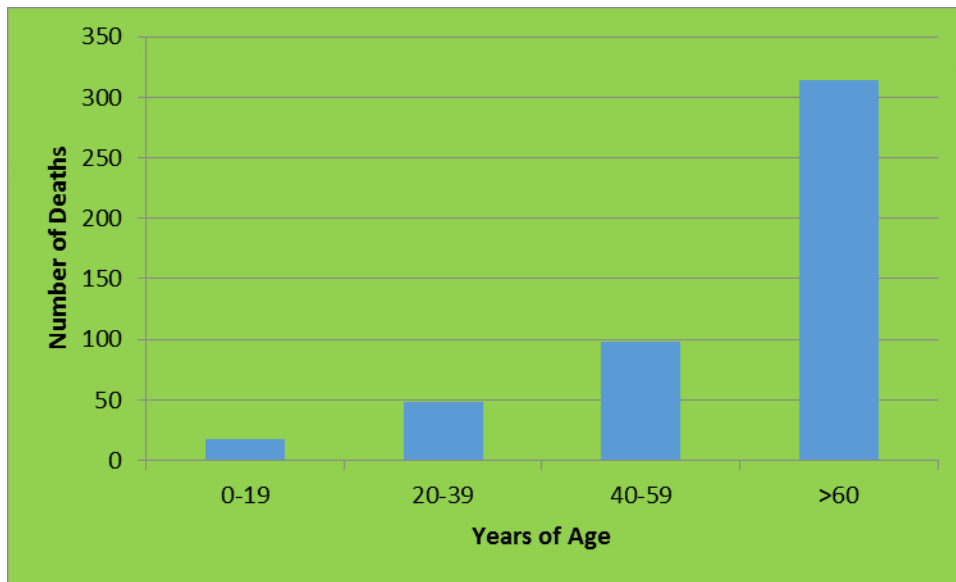
Mesa County population in 2014 (2012 census data)	147,554
Total Mesa County deaths	1578
Percentage of Mesa County citizens who died in 2014	1.1%
Number of deaths investigated	478
Scene Investigations	269
Facility Investigations	209 (12 required autopsies)
Percentage of deaths investigated	30.3%
Number of deaths originating in other counties	36
Number of postmortem examinations	128
Percentage of deaths having an examination	8.1%
- Complete Autopsies	126
- Partial Autopsies	0
- External Examinations	2
Hospital deaths having an examination	12
Toxicology performed	113
Gender of those deaths investigated	
Males	295
Females	183
Race of those deaths investigated	
Caucasian	442
Hispanic	27
Native American	5
Black	2
Other	2
Body Transport	
Coroner's Office	236
Mortuaries – from scene	44
Mortuaries – from facilities	198

**Additional Information**

Unidentified bodies	0
Organ and Tissue referrals	6
Unclaimed bodies	0
Exhumations	0

**The following information pertains only to deaths that were not transferred back to the county of origin.**

**Age**



\*\* In the 0 to 19 years old group there were 18 deaths which included 8 males and 10 females. Of these, 5 were natural deaths, 8 were accidental deaths, 2 were suicides and 2 were homicides. 1 was a death that was transferred back to the county the incident originated from. Of the 8 accidental deaths, 2 were from falls from a cliff in a 16 year old and a 19 year old, 1 was a motor vehicle rollover of an 18 year old, 1 was a fall from a stool onto a hard surface of a 2 year old, and 4 were infants who died of positional asphyxia due to poor sleeping arrangements. The suicides were from hanging in a 12 and 19 year old. Of the 2 homicides 1 was from a gunshot wound of a 15 year old and the other was the result of multiple blunt force injuries in an 11 month old.

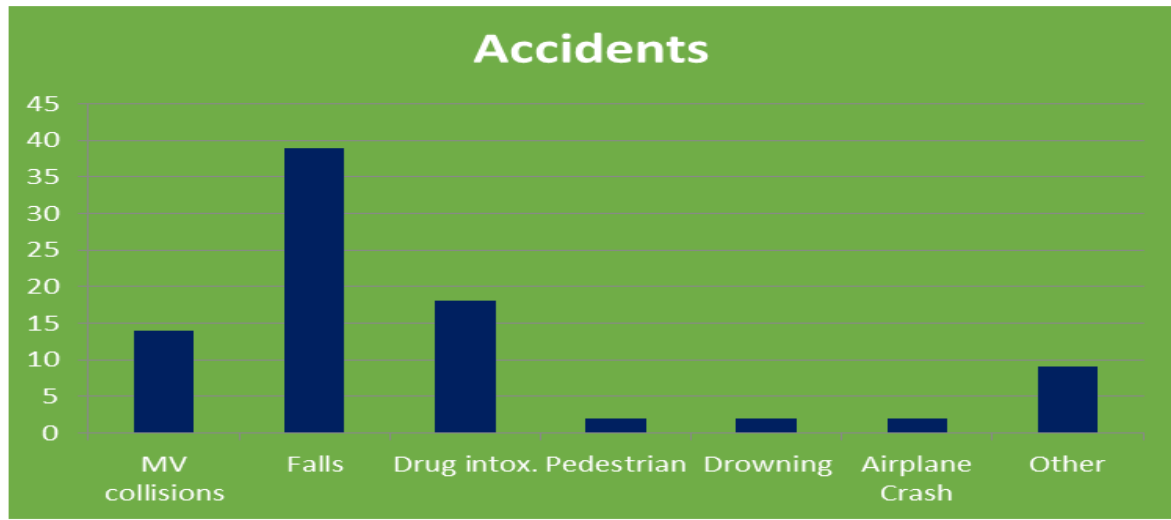
## Manner of Death

Manner	# of cases	# of postmortem exams	% receiving a postmortem exam **
Natural	312	40	13%
Accident	86	46	53%
Suicide	36	34	94%
Homicide	8	8	100%
Undetermined	0	0	0%

\*\* In the 40 accidental deaths in which no postmortem examination was performed, the majority were 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, 2 were motor vehicle accidents, 32 were falls predominantly from a standing height in older individuals, 1 was from a motor vehicle versus pedestrian accident, 3 were from being trapped in a mudslide, 1 was from a drug intoxication and 1 was a motorcycle accident. The 2 suicide deaths in which no postmortem examination was performed were both females, 1 had set herself on fire after taking multiple medications and was transported to the burn center in Denver, CO and the other was a self-inflicted gunshot wound of the chest and was admitted to a long-term care facility.

## Accidental Deaths

Type	Number of deaths
Motor vehicle (MV) collisions	14
Falls	39
Drug intoxication	18
Pedestrian vs. Motor vehicle (MV)	2
Drowning	2
Airplane Crash	2
Other **	9



\*\*The “other” cases include 3 men trapped in the Collbran Mudslide, 4 infant positional asphyxia deaths with poor sleeping arrangements, 1 death was from an adult male positional asphyxia due to alcohol intoxication, and 1 death related to complications from medical therapy.

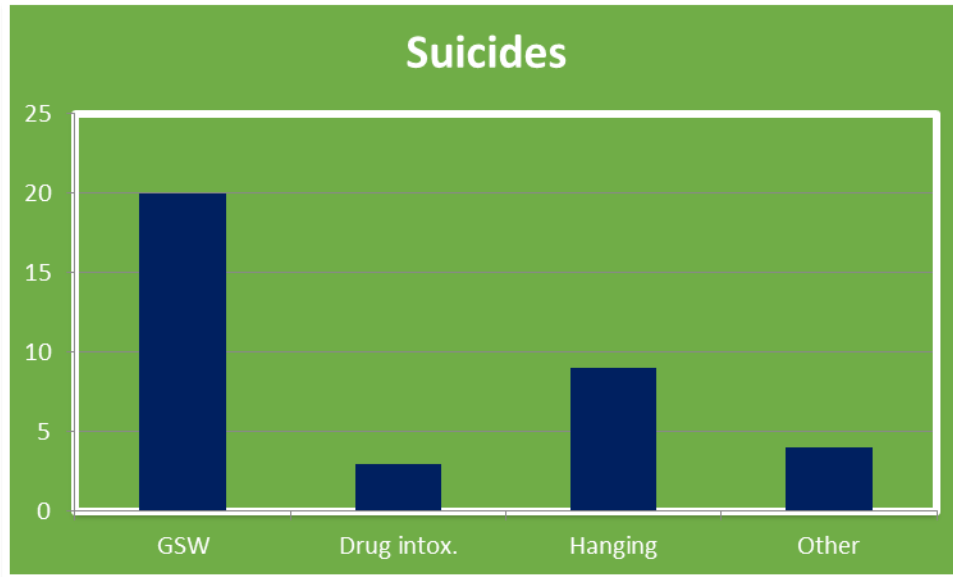
The majority of the falls were of elderly individuals who fell from a standing height, many of which resulting in a fractured hip.

The 14 motor vehicle collision-related deaths displayed the following characteristics:

- Drivers – 10
- Passengers – 4
- Drivers of motorcycle/ATV wearing a helmet – 1
- Drivers of motorcycle/ATV without a helmet – 2
- Automobile victims wearing a seatbelt – 4 (1 was an ATV passenger)
- Automobile victims not wearing a seatbelt – 10 (2 were on motorcycles)
- Alcohol or drugs involved in at least 11 of the deaths (79% of cases)
  - Alcohol only in 8 deaths
  - Alcohol and drugs in 3 deaths

## Suicides

Type	Number of deaths
Gunshot wounds (GSW)	20
Drug intoxications	3
Hanging	9
Other	4



The following are some features of the suicide deaths:

- 28 males and 8 females
- Males ranged from 12 to 84 years of age (average age 45) and included the following:
  - Gunshot wound – 17 deaths
  - Drug intoxication – 1 death
  - Hanging – 7 deaths
  - Jumped off cliff – 2 deaths
  - Drove a vehicle into a stone fence – 1 death
- Females ranged from 19 to 77 years of age (average age 48) and included the following:
  - Gunshot wound – 4 deaths
  - Drug Intoxication - 2
  - Hanging – 1 deaths
  - Thermal burns – 1 death

## Homicides

The 8 homicides had the following characteristics:

- 1 death due to sharp force head injuries
- 1 death due to multiple blunt force injuries
- 1 death undetermined due to decomposed remains
- 1 death was an adult that died from complications of injuries sustained from abuse when an infant
- 4 deaths due to gunshot wounds

## Natural deaths

Of the 312 natural deaths investigated, the majority were cardiovascular related (219 deaths, 70%). Deaths due to cardiovascular causes include myocardial infarcts (heart attacks), heart arrhythmias, strokes and aneurysms. There were 13 deaths related to infectious causes (predominantly pneumonia in elderly individuals), 21 cancer related deaths, 20 deaths related to chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (emphysema) and 4 deaths due to effects of chronic alcoholism.

## Notes of interest

A child is defined as a person 18 years old or less. There was one child abuse related homicide and one shooting of a teenager in 2014. As a comparison, there was no child abuse related deaths in 2012 or 2013, 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 2014 (8 cases) were similar to other years (7 homicides in 2013, 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 increased in 2014 to 36 cases compared to 29 cases in 2013. The number of suicides 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). There were 32 suicides in 2010, 35 suicides in 2009, 39 in 2008 and 43 in 2007.

There were 4 infants who died because of an unsafe sleep environment in 2014. This compares to one infant death each year in 2010 through 2013, two deaths in both 2008 and 2009 and one death in 2007.