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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 2011. Mesa County encompasses an area over 3300 square miles which consists of desert, agricultural and mountain areas. Mesa County is home to approximately 140,000 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

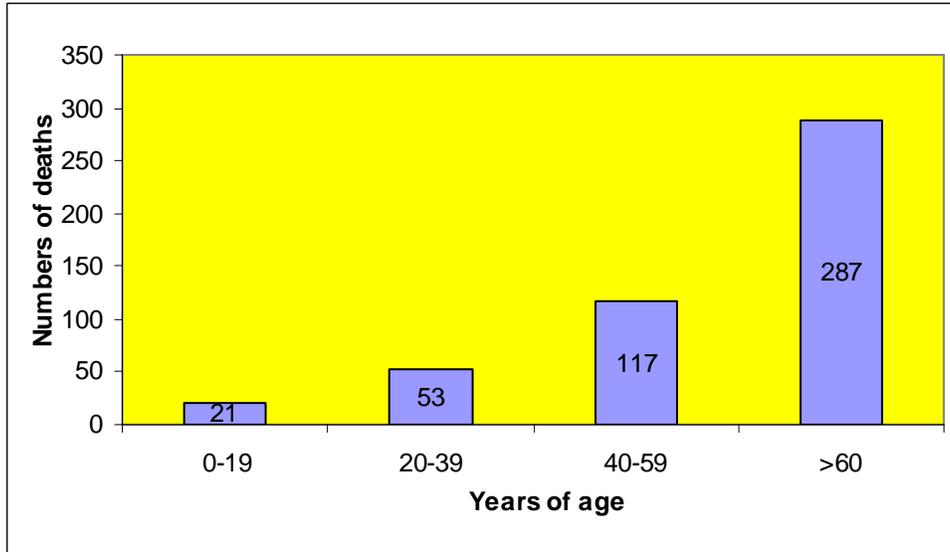
Staff

Dean Havlik, M.D.	Coroner & Forensic Pathologist
Kim Hollingshead, D-ABMDI	Chief Deputy Coroner
Victor Yahn	Deputy Coroner
Brian Clark	Deputy Coroner
Robert Kurtzman, D.O.	Forensic Pathologist

General Statistics

Mesa County population in 2011 (2010 census data)	137,879
Total Mesa County deaths	1450
Percentage of Mesa County citizens who died in 2011	1.0%
Number of deaths investigated	478
Percentage of deaths investigated	32.9%
Number of postmortem examinations	156
Percentage of deaths having an examination	10.8%
Gender of those deaths investigated	
Males	290
Females	188
Race of those deaths investigated	
Caucasian	430
Hispanic	41
Black	2
Asian	3
Native American	1
Filipino	1

Age



** In the 0 to 19 years old group, 11 were males and 10 were females. Of these, 9 were natural deaths, 4 were accidental deaths, 3 were suicides, 3 were homicides and 2 were classified as undetermined. Of the 4 accidental deaths, 2 were motor vehicle accidents, 1 was a drowning of a 17 year old boy and 1 was an infant that died of positional asphyxia after becoming wedged between a bed and an adjacent wall. The 3 suicides included two hangings that were 14 year old and 15 year old brothers who hanged themselves approximately within one month of each other. The other suicide was a 14 year old drug intoxication death. The 3 homicides included two by gunshot wounds and the third was a 2 month old by blunt force injuries. The 2 undetermined deaths included a one year old child who ingested oxycodone and it was unclear if it was an accidental ingestion or given to the infant intentionally. The other undetermined death was of an 18 year old female who sustained a gunshot wound and it was unclear if it was accidental or suicide.

Manner of Death

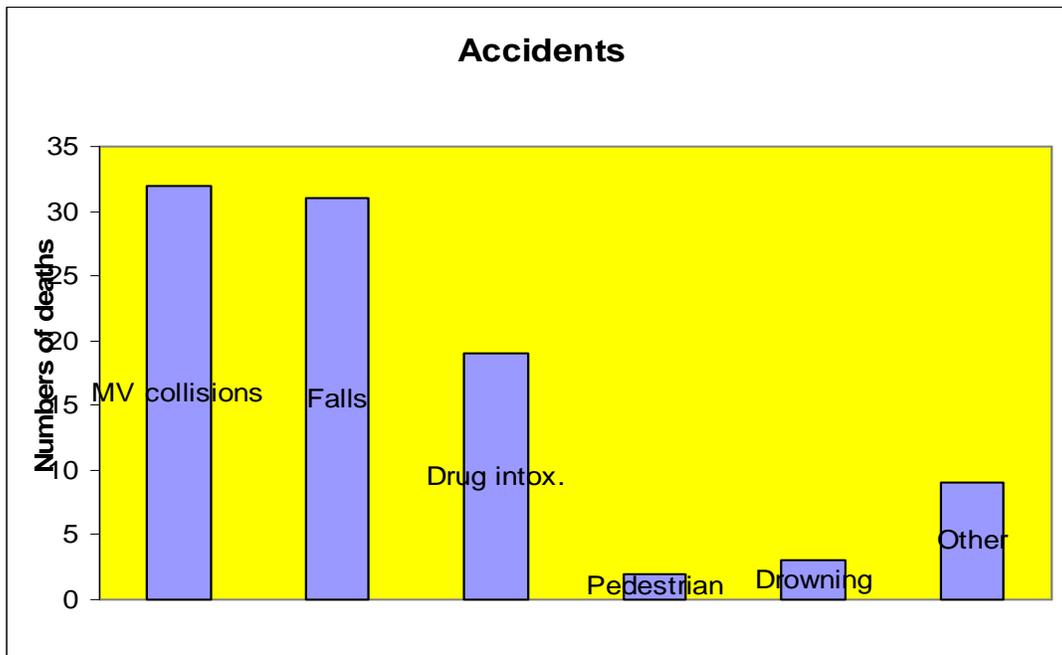
Manner	# of cases	# of postmortem exams	% receiving a postmortem exam **
Natural	315	41	13%
Accident	96	53	55%
Suicide	44	42	95%
Homicide	9	9	100%
Undetermined	11	11	100%

** In the 43 accidental deaths in which no postmortem examination was performed, the decedents were hospitalized for an extended period of time and the injuries were documented in the hospital. Of these deaths, 11 were motor vehicle accidents, 29 were

falls predominantly from a standing height in older individuals, 1 was from a motor vehicle versus pedestrian accident, 1 was from a medical procedure and 1 was from an accidental gunshot wound. The suicide deaths do not include 3 cases that actually were deaths that occurred in Mesa County but the initial event where the suicide attempt took place was not in Mesa County and the individuals were not Mesa County residents (i.e. the decedents were hospitalized for an extended period of time in Mesa County and ultimately died in Mesa County). Because these 3 deaths are not included in the numbers in the Manner of Death table above, the total numbers in the table do not equal the total number of deaths investigated. Of the 2 suicide deaths in which no postmortem examination was performed, 1 was from a gunshot wound and the other was from a drug intoxication, both of which were hospitalized for an extended period of time.

Accidental Deaths

Type	Number of deaths
Motor vehicle (MV) collisions	32
Falls	31
Drug intoxication	19
Pedestrian vs. Motor vehicle (MV)	2
Drowning	3
Other **	9



**The "other" cases include 2 deaths due to hypothermia, 1 gunshot wound, 1 mountain biking accident, 1 infant positional asphyxia, 1 fire victim and 3 deaths related to medical therapy.

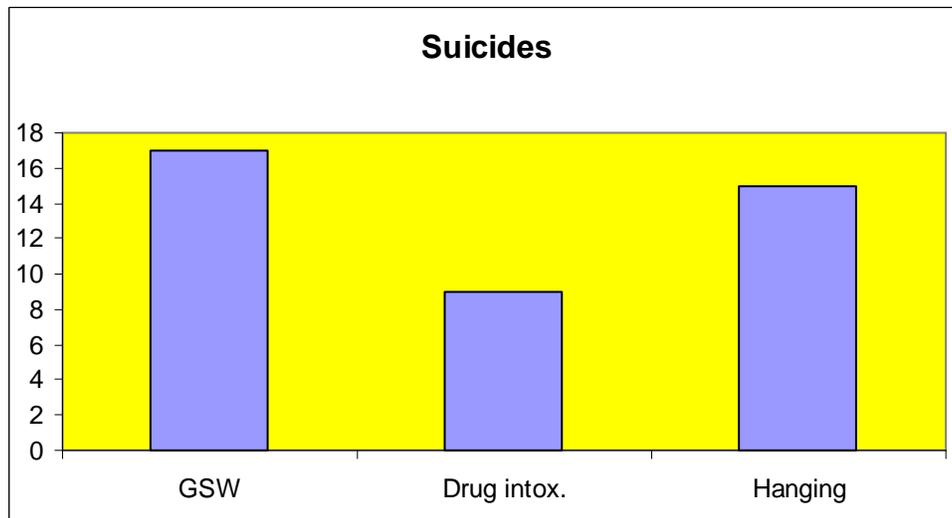
The majority of the falls were of elderly individuals who fell from a standing height, many of which resulting in a fractured hip.

The 32 motor vehicle collision-related deaths displayed the following characteristics:

- Drivers of automobiles – 17
- Passengers of automobiles – 6
- Drivers of motorcycle/ATV wearing a helmet – 3
- Drivers of motorcycle/ATV without a helmet – 6
- Automobile victims wearing a seatbelt – 6
- Automobile victims not wearing a seatbelt – 14
- Automobile victims unknown if wearing a seatbelt – 3
- Alcohol or drugs involved in at least 14 of the deaths (44% of cases)
 - Alcohol only in 8 deaths
 - Alcohol and drugs in 3 deaths
 - Drugs only in 3 deaths
 - Unknown if alcohol or drugs involved in 5 deaths

Suicides

Type	Number of deaths
Gunshot wounds (GSW)	17
Drug intoxications	9
Hanging	15



The following are some features of the suicide deaths:

- 33 males and 11 females
- Males ranged from 14 to 75 years of age (average age 43) and included the following:
 - Gunshot wounds – 15 deaths
 - Drug intoxications – 3 deaths
 - Hanging – 13 deaths
 - Carbon monoxide – 1 death
 - Motor vehicle versus train – 1 death
- Females ranged from 14 to 72 years of age (average age 44) and included the following:
 - Gunshot wounds – 2 deaths
 - Drug intoxications – 6 deaths
 - Hanging – 2 deaths
 - Motor vehicle traveling off the CO National Monument – 1 death

Homicides

The 9 homicides had the following characteristics:

- 4 deaths due to gunshot wounds
- 4 deaths due to blunt force injuries/beatings
- 1 death due to sharp force injuries

Undetermined deaths

There were 11 deaths that had an undetermined manner of death. Eight of these deaths were drug intoxications. The manner was undetermined in these deaths primarily due to the lack of evidence indicating whether these deaths were suicides, i.e. intentional ingestion of the drug(s), versus accidental over usage of the drug(s). There was one gunshot wound related death and one death of a pedestrian who was hit by a train. In both of these cases it was unclear if the death was an accident or suicide. One case was skeletal remains in which there was an unclear cause and manner of death due to the condition of the remains.

Natural deaths

Of the 315 natural deaths investigated, the majority were cardiovascular related (196 deaths, 62%). Deaths due to cardiovascular causes include myocardial infarcts (heart attacks), heart arrhythmias, strokes and aneurysms. There were 22 deaths related to infectious causes (predominantly pneumonia in elderly individuals), 31 cancer related deaths, 13 deaths related to chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (emphysema) and 18 deaths due to effects of chronic alcoholism.

Notes of interest

There was 1 child homicide in 2011 which involved blunt force injuries in an infant. In 2010, there was a child-related homicide, which involved the shooting of a teenager by another teenager. In 2009 there were no child homicides, in 2008 there were 3 child homicides and in 2007 there were 2 child homicides. Overall, the numbers of homicides in 2011 (9 cases) were similar to other years (8 homicides in 2010, 5 homicides in 2009, 9 homicides in 2008 and 6 homicides in 2007). The numbers of suicides had decreased over the last four years but were back up again in 2011 with 44 cases. There were 32 suicides in 2010, 35 suicides in 2009, 39 in 2008 and 43 in 2007.