

LEHIGH COUNTY CORONER'S OFFICE
& FORENSICS CENTER

2024



ANNUAL REPORT

DANIEL A. BUGLIO, D-ABMDI
LEHIGH COUNTY CORONER

Dedication

In honor of those we have lost—whose stories remain unknown to us but whose passing weighs heavily on our hearts—and in deep sympathy for the friends and family who are navigating through profound grief and loss, we dedicate this report to you as a gesture of respect and solidarity in your sorrow.

“There is no grief like the grief that does not speak.”

-Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

Acknowledgements

The staff of the Lehigh County Coroner's Office and Forensics Center consistently demonstrate exemplary compassion, professionalism, and commitment in fulfilling their responsibilities, serving the community with unwavering integrity, fidelity, and dedication to duty,

24 hours per day,

7 days per week,

365 days per year.

The Coroner's Office is comprised of a diverse team of professionals whose extensive training and experiences significantly enhance our investigative capabilities. Our staff includes individuals with expertise in emergency medical services, law enforcement, fire and rescue services, fire investigation, toxicology, military service, and funeral service. Furthermore, several team members hold advanced degrees in forensic sciences and related disciplines.

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LEHIGH COUNTY CORONER'S OFFICE & FORENSICS CENTER

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Letter from the Coroner

Everyone,

I am honored to present the 2024 annual report for the Lehigh County Coroner's Office and Forensic Center. I feel a deep sense of gratitude and accomplishment as your coroner, leading a dedicated, trained, and compassionate team of investigators. Together, we continue to advance the office with innovation and exceptional service for those who need us most.

In 2024, our office received accreditation from the National Association of Medical Examiners (NAME), making us the only NAME-accredited coroner's office in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. This accreditation is a testament to the quality, integrity, and credibility of our office. In 2023, I introduced the role of two part-time Bereavement Coordinators. Their primary purpose is to provide one-on-one support to families who have lost a loved one. I am proud to announce that, due to the success and necessity of this role, one of the Bereavement Coordinators has been promoted to a full-time position.

Additionally, the coroner's office has begun preparations for our post-mortem CT scanner, with construction set to begin within weeks. This state-of-the-art device will significantly enhance our death investigations and serve as a valuable resource for our neighboring partners. As we approach our 11-year anniversary in our forensic center, we have modernized and repainted the entire facility, with the exception of the morgue area, making it a true showpiece for the community!

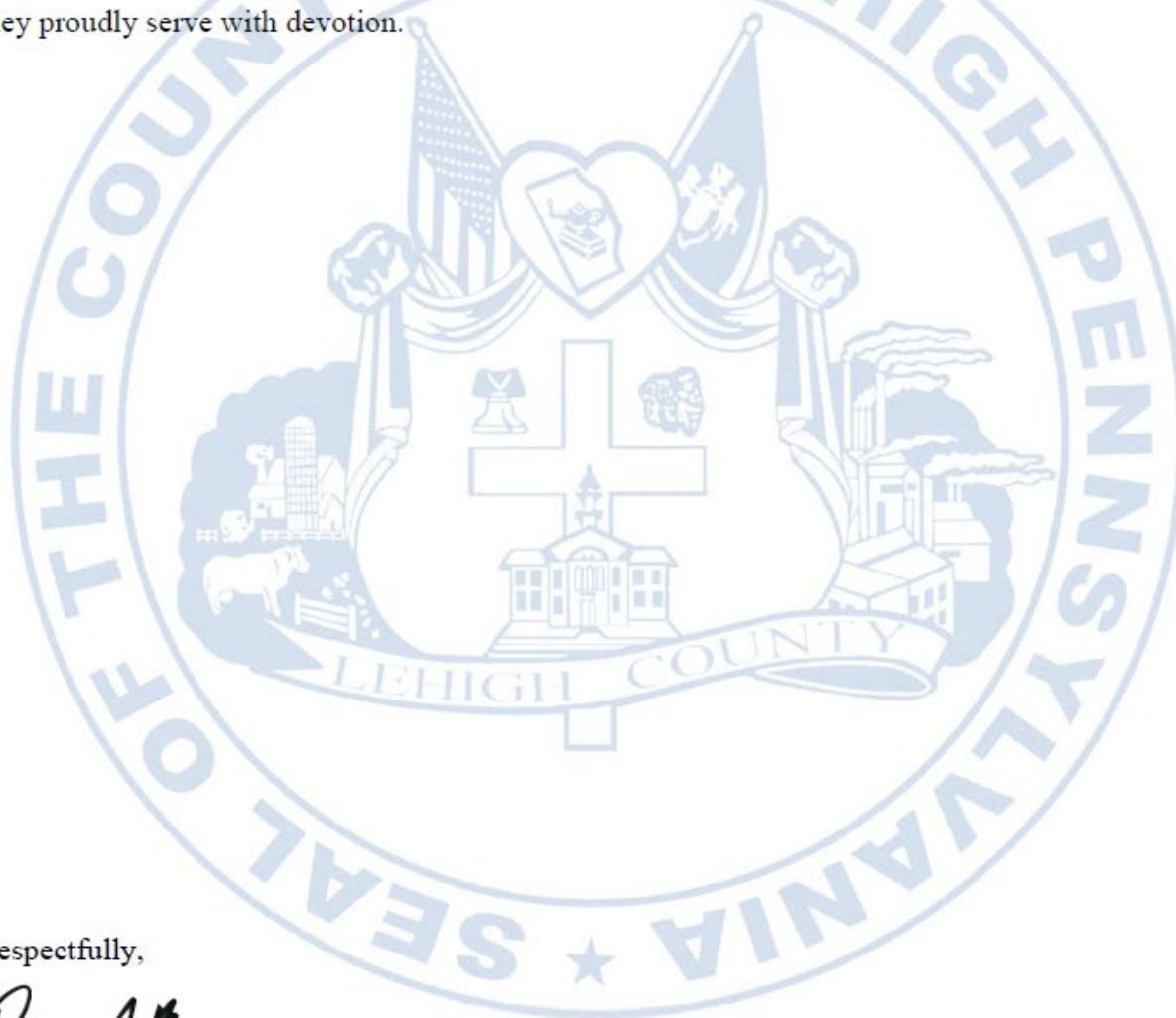
While much has been accomplished, there is still more to do! As your coroner, I am committed to moving forward and ensuring that the Lehigh County Coroner's Office remains the best in the entire Northeast. I look forward to continuing my work with the community and, most importantly,



LEHIGH COUNTY CORONER'S OFFICE & FORENSICS CENTER

being there for every family that needs us during their most difficult times. I will always prioritize transparency and strive to provide outstanding service to our families.

I am incredibly grateful for the unwavering loyalty and support from my entire staff. Each member of my team consistently excels even in the most challenging and emotional situations. Every individual has demonstrated dedication, compassion, trust, and integrity, and they proudly serve with devotion.



Respectfully,

Daniel A. Buglio, D-ABMDI
Lehigh County Coroner

Mission Statement

The Lehigh County Coroner's Office and Forensics Center provides services twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. The Lehigh County Coroner's Office is staffed by diverse and highly trained personnel whose function is to investigate the facts and circumstances surrounding a death over which the coroner has jurisdiction, and determine the cause and manner of death.

Forensic investigative services performed include: death investigation, post mortem examination, photography, fingerprinting, entomology, anthropology, temperature analysis, child and infant death analysis, bloodstain pattern analysis, odontology, and ophthalmology.

Death scene investigations include: natural deaths, accidents, suicides, homicides, as well as deaths due to neglect, abuse, terrorism, fire/arson, industrial accidents and mass disasters.

The investigations and rulings of the Lehigh County Coroner's Office and Forensics Center concerning criminal acts, criminal neglect or those that affect public health and safety, are often the foundation for follow-up actions by other investigative agencies.

The six basic functions of the Lehigh County Coroner's Office are:

- Determine the Cause and Manner of Death for individuals in a timely fashion determining whether or not there is sufficient reason to believe that the death may have resulted from a criminal act or criminal neglect.
- Identify the deceased with the highest degree of certainty possible, and provide written documentation of the same.
- Proper and timely notification of death to the legal next of kin.
- Prepare, maintain, and safeguard thorough investigative reports and scene documentation.
- Account for, maintain, and safeguard personal property and evidence.
- Provide assistance to families involved in our investigations as applicable.



Introduction

The Coroner's Office is an independent investigative division of the Lehigh County Government. The citizens of Lehigh County fund the office through the Office of the Lehigh County Executive and the Board of Commissioners. The Lehigh County Coroner's Office was the first coroner's office in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and the second worldwide to have received accreditation from the International Association of Coroners and Medical Examiners (IACME). We have complied with recertification and continue to uphold the highest standards to maintain this accreditation. We completed our quinquennial reaccreditation in 2021, making 2024 our 17th year of being accredited. The Lehigh County Coroner's Office also received office accreditation through the National Association of Medical Examiners (NAME) making our office a double accredited agency.

The position of coroner is an elected position, voted upon by the citizens of Lehigh County. Coroner Daniel A. Buglio, D-ABMDI, has been with the office since the spring of 2000, serving as an Investigator and then as First Deputy Coroner/Operations Manager. He is a member of the Pennsylvania State Coroner's Association and the International Association of Coroners and Medical Examiners. Coroner Buglio serves as Co-Chair for the Lehigh County Child Death Review Team, member of the Lehigh County Suicide Task Force, the Lehigh County Elder Abuse Task Force, and the Allentown Heroin/Opioid Task Force. Under the direction of Coroner Buglio, the Coroner's Office conducts medicolegal death investigations, which can include the authorization to conduct autopsies, administrative support, as well as many other family assistance services.

Lehigh County is the most populated of four counties that comprise the Lehigh Valley region of eastern Pennsylvania and northwestern New Jersey. It is one of the fastest growing counties in Pennsylvania, with a current estimated population of 379,234 with a growth rate of 0.39% in the past year according to recent United States census data. Lehigh County's largest city, Allentown, had a population of 124,597 in 2024, a -0.9% decrease in the last decade, ranking behind only Philadelphia and Pittsburgh. Lehigh County is home to the Lehigh Valley International Airport and Allentown Queen City Municipal Airport. Public bus service is also available to and from the metropolitan cities of New York City and Philadelphia. Major highways that traverse Lehigh County include Interstates 78 and 476, Routes 22, 222, and 309, and numerous smaller state routes. The Lehigh Valley has been part of a warehouse "boom" in recent years, creating a significant increase in the amount of truck traffic along the road network.

There are a total of nine hospitals in Lehigh County. The two largest health-care systems, Lehigh Valley Health Network and St. Luke's Hospital Network, both boast Level One trauma centers with helicopter access. Investigations will often stretch far outside Lehigh County and into our neighboring counties and states. In addition, Lehigh County has over twenty-five nursing home facilities within its boundaries.

The Lehigh County Coroner's Office is located in Allentown, South Whitehall Township, Pennsylvania. The complex building is shared by Cetronia Ambulance Corps, Lehigh County Special Operations, Lehigh County Emergency Management, and the Lehigh County District Attorney's Office Firearms & Tool Mark Laboratory. The Coroner's Office is comprised of approximately 6,000 square feet of office space and approximately 7,000 square feet housing the morgue operations. On the following page are photos of the main autopsy suite and decomposition autopsy room.





Main Autopsy Suite

Consisting of two individual Autopsy tables

Individual Autopsy Table



Decomposition Autopsy Suite

Self-contained within the Morgue Area

Statute on Coroner's Investigation

Section 1218-B. Coroner's investigation

(a) Duty.--The coroner having a view of the body shall investigate the facts and circumstances concerning a death that appears to have happened within the county, notwithstanding where the cause of the death may have occurred, for the purpose of determining whether or not an autopsy or inquest should be conducted in the following cases:

1. A sudden death not caused by a readily recognizable disease or, if the cause of death cannot be properly certified, by a physician on the basis of prior recent medical attendance.
2. A death occurring under suspicious circumstances, including if alcohol, a drug or another toxic substance may have had a direct bearing on the outcome.
3. A death occurring as a result of violence or trauma, whether apparently homicidal, suicidal or accidental, including, but not limited to, a death due to mechanical, thermal, chemical, electrical or radiational injury, drowning, cave-in or subsidence.
4. A death in which trauma, chemical injury, drug overdose or reaction to a drug or medication or medical treatment was a primary or secondary, direct or indirect, contributory, aggravating or precipitating cause of death.
5. A perioperative death in which the death is not readily explainable on the basis of prior disease.
6. A death in which the body is unidentified or unclaimed.
7. A death known or suspected to be due to contagious disease and constituting a public hazard.
8. A death occurring in prison or a penal institution or while in the custody of the police.
9. A death of an individual whose body is to be cremated, buried at sea or otherwise disposed of so as to be unavailable for examination thereafter.
10. A sudden and unexplained infant death
11. A stillbirth.

(b) Purpose. --The purpose of an investigation under subsection (a) shall be to determine:

- (1) The cause and manner of the death.
- (2) Whether or not there is sufficient reason for the coroner to believe that the death may have resulted from a criminal act or criminal neglect of a person other than the deceased.

(c) Requirements. --As part of an investigation under subsection (a), the coroner shall determine the identity of the deceased and notify the next of kin of the deceased.

(1218-B added Oct. 24, 2018, P.L.931, No.154)



Roles of the Coroner's Office

The staff of the coroner's office hold a wide variety of roles on a daily basis to facilitate the mission of the office. This includes responding to and investigating deaths throughout the geographic boundaries of Lehigh County, regardless of location, time and weather. Investigators perform postmortem examinations, attend autopsies, obtain toxicology samples, consult with medical personnel, laboratory personnel, and review medical records. Investigators routinely interact with law enforcement agencies on the local, state and federal levels as well as district attorney's offices throughout the Commonwealth.

Staff members are well versed in communicating with families and assisting them accordingly in their time of need. Quite often, an investigator is the first person to bring the worst of news. We provide comprehensive support to family members throughout the investigatory process and offer continued assistance well beyond its conclusion, ensuring they have the resources and guidance they need. Additional duties include, reviewing investigative and autopsy findings with the legal next of kin, and coordinating release of the deceased and any property to the funeral home of the families' choosing.

The coroner's office staff provides testimony both in court and in depositions. This can be for both civil and criminal matters.

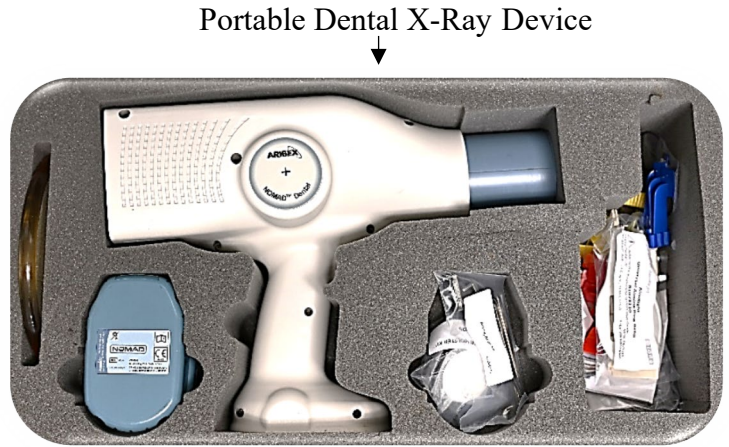
The coroner's office is responsible for reporting deaths to numerous outside agencies. Pennsylvania Department of Labor and Industry, Occupational Safety and Health Administration, U.S. Consumer Products Safety Commission, Pennsylvania Department of Transportation, and many other government and regulatory agencies.



The coroner's office cooperates routinely and is actively involved in the local and state Child Death Reporting Systems. These agencies are comprised of members of several disciplines within the local health care systems, as well as local health bureau members, to review all deaths under the age of twenty-one participate in various programs and needs ranging from suicide prevention to pandemic preparedness. Additionally, the staff is routinely active in other entities, whether it is for education, guidelines or resources to assist with current trends in investigation procedures.

All of our investigators attend annual training to obtain and maintain the continuing education requirements, set forth by the Office of the Attorney General and the Pennsylvania Coroner's Education Board. Many of our staff have passed the rigorous training to become registered with the American Board of Medicolegal Death Investigators, which requires extensive field experience and training. Several of our staff have received additional specialized training in diagnostic imaging through the use of digital x-rays and dental x-rays.





Portable Dental X-Ray Device

Portable X-Ray Machine

The Lehigh County Coroner's Office is exceptionally prepared, trained, and well-educated, demonstrating a strong commitment to meeting the demands of our critical field. We are dedicated to delivering the highest level of service not only to the families we assist, but also to the various external agencies with whom we collaborate daily, including local and state police departments, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, Homeland Security, and the National Transportation Safety Board.



Please be advised that the annual report from the Lehigh County Coroner's Office encompasses only those cases investigated by the office and does not account for all deaths that have occurred within Lehigh County. For a comprehensive overview of all deaths in the county, please refer to:

Pennsylvania Department of Health
Bureau of Vital Records
105 Nesbitt Road
New Castle, PA 16105
(724)-656-3100



Grants / Funding

In 2024, the Lehigh County Coroner's Office was the recipient of several awarded grants. In May of this year, with a grant award of \$54,000, from the U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, the Lehigh County Coroner's Office received office accreditation through the National Association of Medical Examiners (NAME). The National Association of Medical Examiners (NAME) is synonymous with professional excellence and leadership in the field of medicolegal death investigation. The objectives of NAME are many; all designed to promote the highest quality of forensic pathology practice and medicolegal death investigation in the world. Obtaining NAME accreditation represents a "seal of approval" from a community consisting of medical examiners, forensic pathologists and medicolegal partners across the nation; indicating that the Lehigh County Coroner's Office upholds death investigation standards that are of the highest level; benefiting not only our relationships with the forensic pathology physicians and law enforcement organizations we work with on a daily basis, but most importantly, the families we serve.

GE VCT 64 slice CT scan ↙



In September of 2024, our office was awarded \$409,500 from the Department of Justice through the solicitation title: BJA FY24 Paul Coverdell Forensic Science Improvement Grants Program – Competitive. The Grant request entitled "Improving Post Mortem Examinations with Computed Topography in the Lehigh County Coroner's Office" was one of an anticipated 15 awards granted nationwide

Over a three-year grant period, grant funds will be used for renovations, purchase and installation, and maintenance of a **GE VCT 64 slice CT scan**, which will improve the quality of forensic examinations. The funding is also an investment into training and education which will provide untold benefits. An additional external shareholder, Lehigh Valley Health Network Trauma Physicians Group, will utilize the results from the PMCT studies, in conjunction with the autopsy reports from the forensic pathologists, to review trauma deaths, including emergency medical therapy provided, and compare this information to those individuals that survive similar incidents in order to develop prevention and treatment strategies to reduce morbidity and mortality. This collaboration will directly influence the trauma system quality improvement program and will allow for the adoption and evaluation of best practices as outlined in the 2016 National Academy of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine report entitled "A National Trauma Care System: Integrating Military and Civilian Trauma Systems to Achieve Zero Preventable Deaths After Injury".



Grants / Funding

In October of 2024, the coroner's office received a \$68,000 grant through the Pennsylvania Department of Community & Economic Development, Local Share Account and GEDTF (Gaming Funds), for the purchase of new digital camera equipment. Nikon Z50II cameras and lenses have been chosen due to advanced mirrorless technology used to produce high quality imagery; as well as the inability to integrate with our computers, cell phones and iPad devices. The importance of digital photography in death investigations cannot be understated. The coroner's office averages approximately **80,000** digital photographs taken each year. The requested camera equipment would greatly assist the staff of the Lehigh County Coroner's Office in pursuing the highest level of service to the communities we serve.

Randox Evidence MultiSTAT analyzer



In November of 2024, the office was awarded \$96,080 from the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency (PCCD) for three separate projects. The first project, is for the purchase of a one-year supply of Randox Evidence MultiSTAT Toxplex Quant kits. The MultiSTAT Toxplex Quant kits are used in our recently acquired **Randox Evidence MultiSTAT analyzer**. With minimal sample preparation, qualitative and semi-quantitative results for twenty-nine drugs of abuse are obtained in approximately thirty-six minutes. With this technology, the office can provide quick and valuable information to our partners in law enforcement.

In a drug related death investigation, identifying illicit drugs in real time can be a key to an investigation that leads to drug dealing patterns and to an arrest of those supplying the drugs. The Lehigh County Coroner's Office takes an active role in combating the current opioid crisis by partnering with many outside agencies such as the Allentown Health Bureau and the Lehigh County Opioid Task Force. By providing timely and accurate information, it helps those agencies formulate strategies to identify drug trends, treatment options and promote education all designed to prevent opioid deaths in the future.

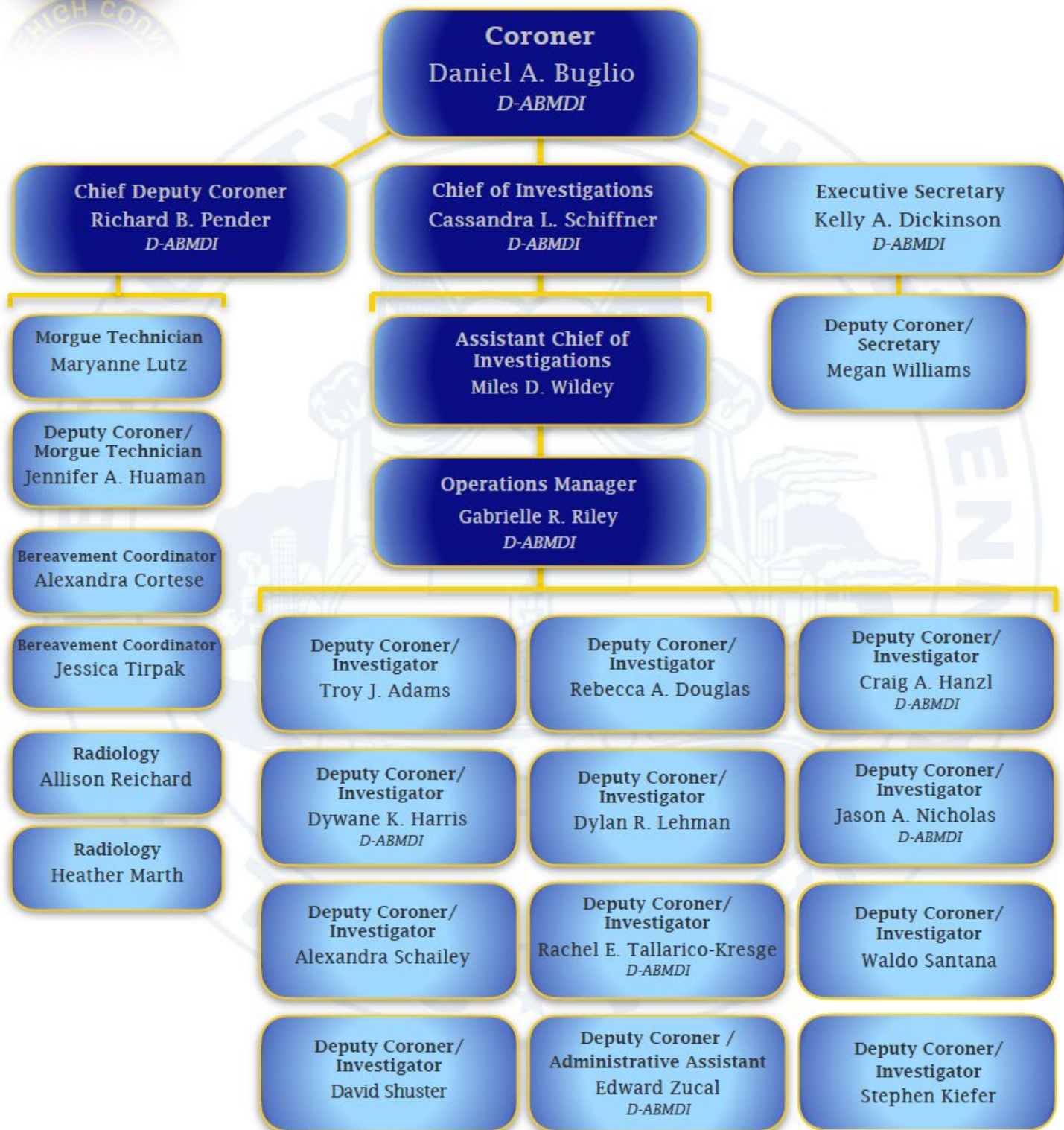
The second project is the purchase of Apple iPad Pro computer tablets. The Apple iPad is a versatile tool which would provide our investigators with access to office case files, medical records, capable of cellular and Wi-Fi connection, all while being in any location in-office or out. Through this specific project, we expect to see a higher degree of detail to all of our investigations. In addition, we expect to have a significant, positive impact on case management and case communications, particularly with the medical community, law enforcement and Gift of Life Donor Program Transplant Coordinators. Funds are also reserved for a third project, which includes additional specialized digital camera equipment, designed for ultraviolet photography.





LEHIGH COUNTY CORONER'S OFFICE & FORENSICS CENTER

CHAIN OF COMMAND



ACCREDITED BY THE INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF CORONERS & MEDICAL EXAMINERS

CORONER DANIEL A. BUGLIO, D-ABMDI



Vehicle Fleet

The Lehigh County Coroner's Office is equipped with 4 Ford Utility Police Interceptors, 1 Chevrolet Tahoe SSV, 1 Chevrolet Utility Truck, and 1 Ford Explorer used for special assignments. Our fleet is meticulously maintained and regularly serviced to ensure optimal performance and longevity. Below, you will find photographs of our current vehicles, showcasing our commitment to quality and reliability.



The Investigator Vehicles, also known as Interceptors, are utilized daily by our team, each outfitted with essential gear and equipment necessary for conducting comprehensive death investigations. These scenes can encompass a wide variety of locations, including private residences, commercial establishments, hospitals, nursing homes, public recreational areas, and other relevant sites.



Vehicle Fleet



The 2010 Chevy Utility Truck is specifically designed to address larger-scale scene investigations and outdoor inquiries, making it a crucial asset for responding to death investigations that occur in high-visibility public settings.



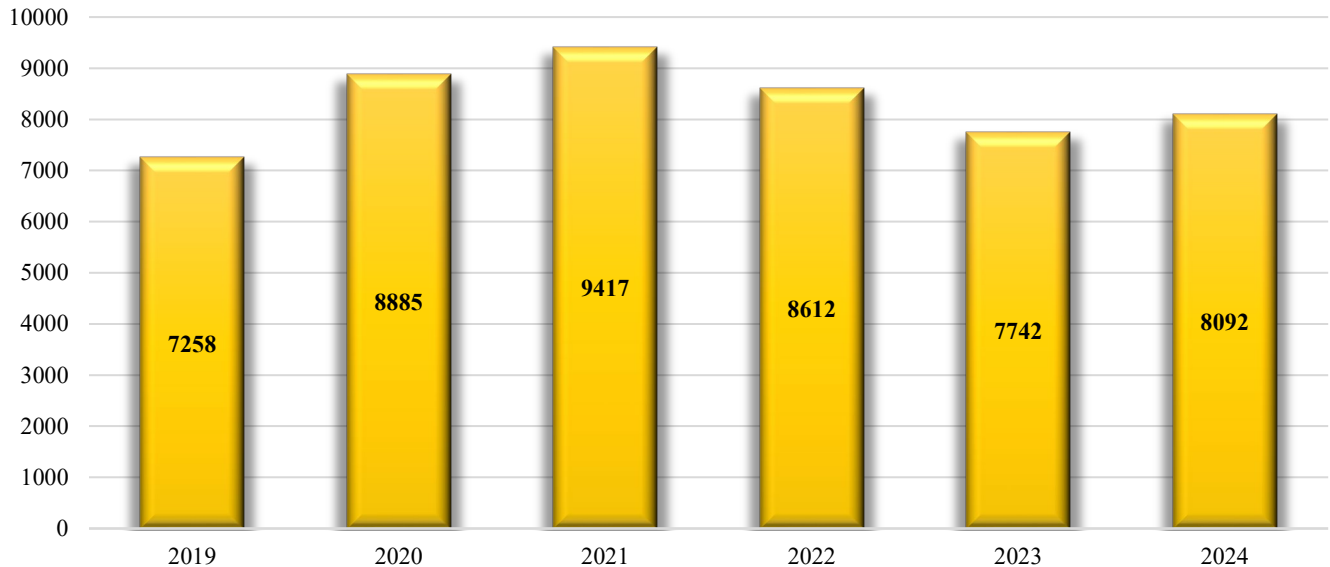
The Chevrolet Tahoe SSV is designated for the Coroner, followed by a 2020 Ford Explorer designated for Supervisors during their on-call weeks. Both vehicles are outfitted with emergency lighting, and essential equipment required for conducting death investigations.



2024 INVESTIGATION DATA

The information provided in this report was compiled from the deaths that were reported to the Lehigh County Coroner's Office during the 2024 calendar year, with reference to years past.

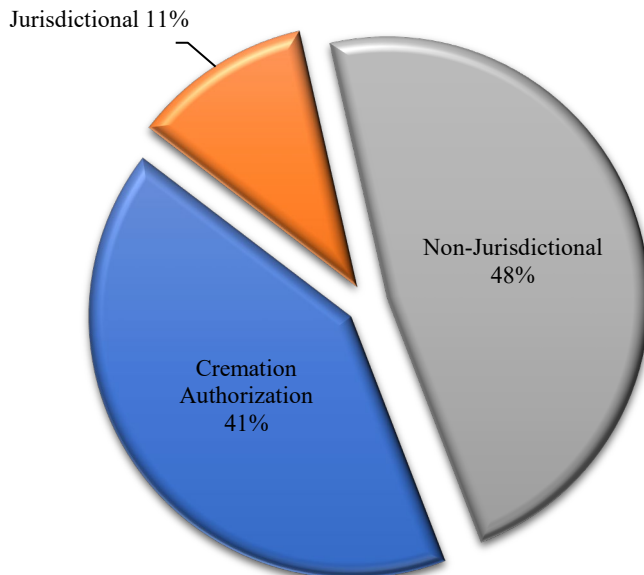
Total Investigations



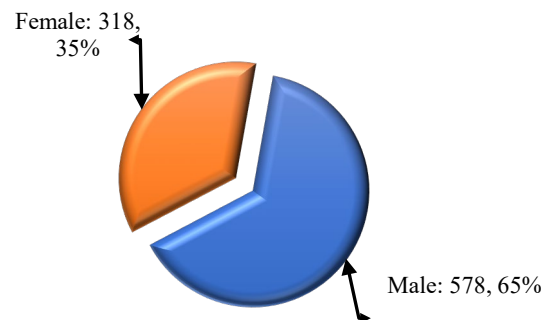
In 2024, our office conducted a total of 8,092 investigations. Jurisdictional cases, which required a deputy coroner response and scene investigation accounted for 896 cases.

The remaining 7,196 investigations consist of Non-Jurisdictional cases, which are natural deaths that occurred under medical care but met the criteria of a reportable death (3,860) and authorizations for decedents to be cremated (3,336.)

2024 Investigations by Type

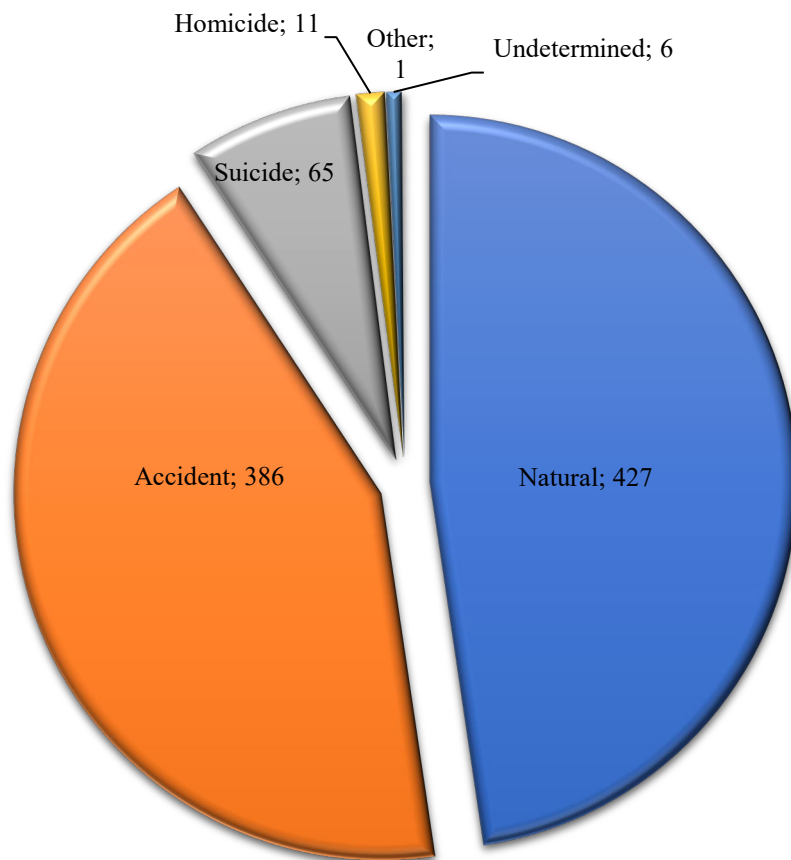


Jurisdictional By Gender



Manners of Death

The manner of death refers to the classification that describes how an injury or disease culminates in mortality. This classification is delineated into five medicolegal categories: Natural, Accident, Suicide, Homicide, and Undetermined. Cases classified as "Pending Investigation" are those where a formal determination is deferred pending the completion and analysis of further forensic examinations, such as autopsy or toxicology reports. The chart below illustrates the percentage distribution of manners of death as determined by the coroner's office in 2024. There are 0 cases pending further investigation at the time of this report.



In 2024, the Lehigh County Coroner's Office and Forensics Center investigated:

-427 Natural Deaths

-386 Accidental Deaths

-65 Suicides

-11 Homicides

-6 Undetermined

-1 Other

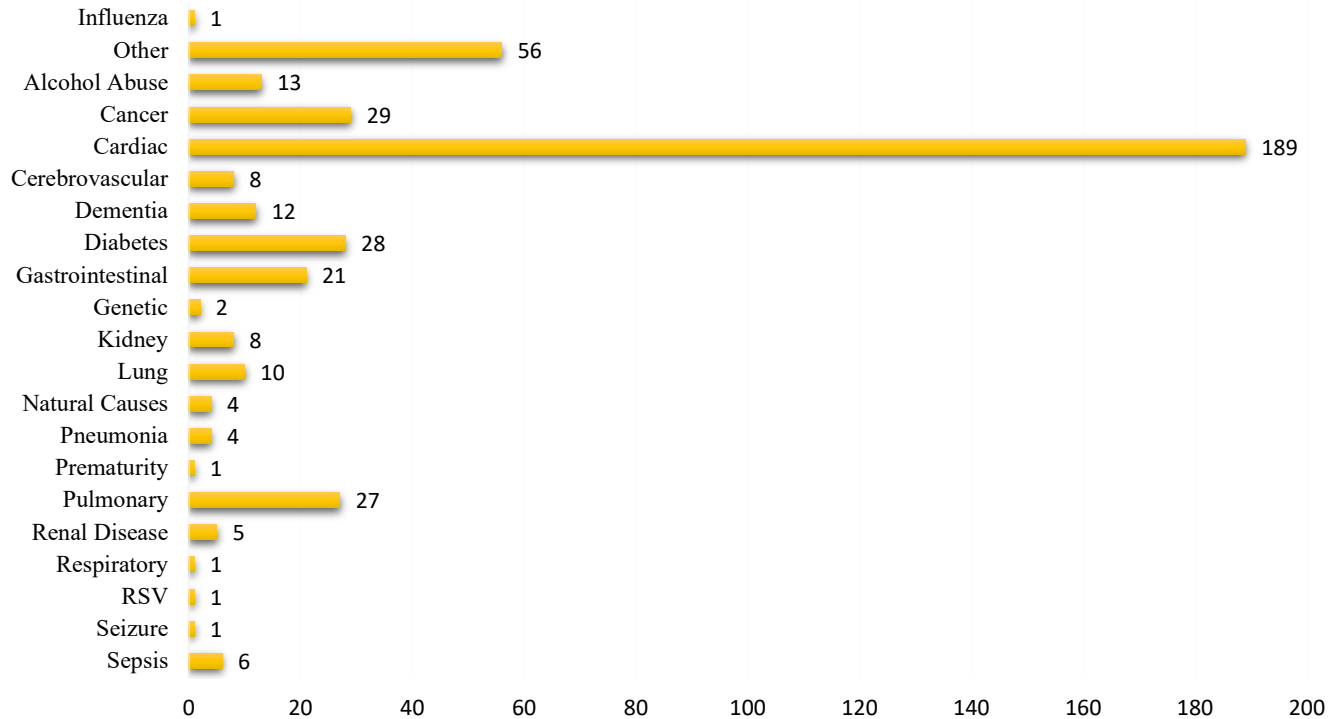
■ Natural ■ Accident ■ Suicide ■ Homicide ■ Undetermined ■ Other



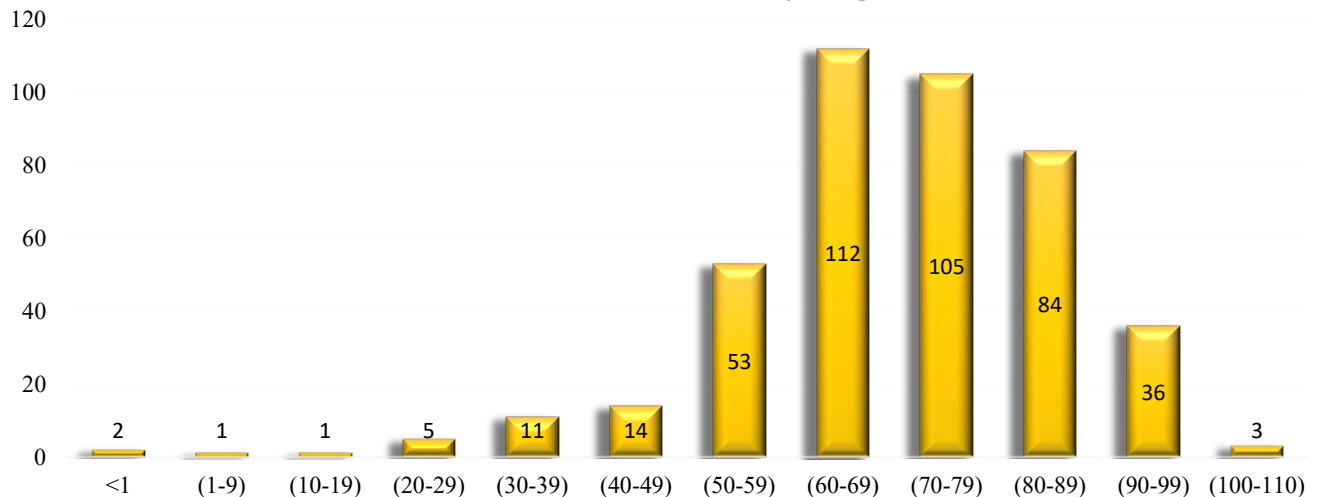
Natural Death

By definition, a natural death is death occurring in the course of nature and from natural causes (such as age or disease), as opposed to an accident or act of violence. Often, a natural death can occur suddenly without a recognized disease process, or while the deceased is not under medical care. Of the **427** **natural death** cases investigated in 2024, 29 required an autopsy to determine the Cause and Manner of Death. The chart below represents the natural cases investigated in 2024, and the associated disease process. “Other” is comprised of natural deaths involving multiple underlying disease processes.

Natural Death Investigations

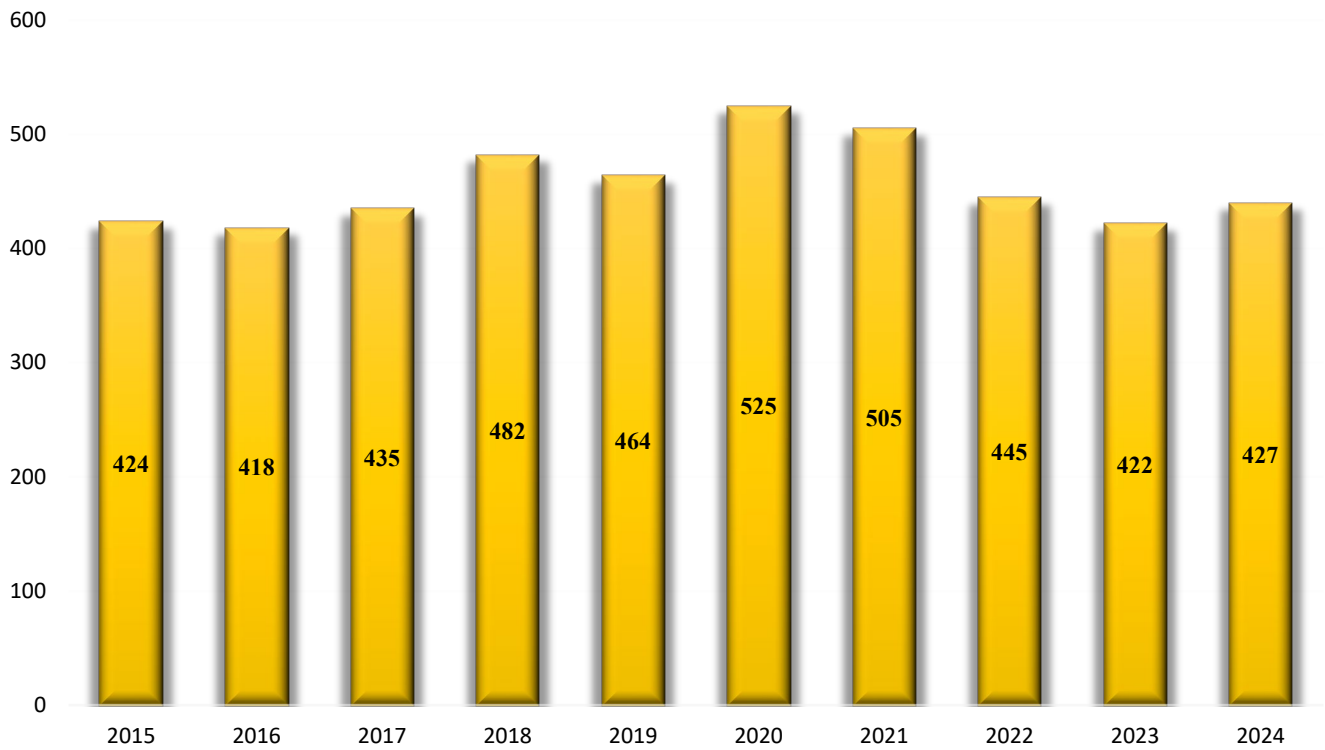


Natural Deaths by Age

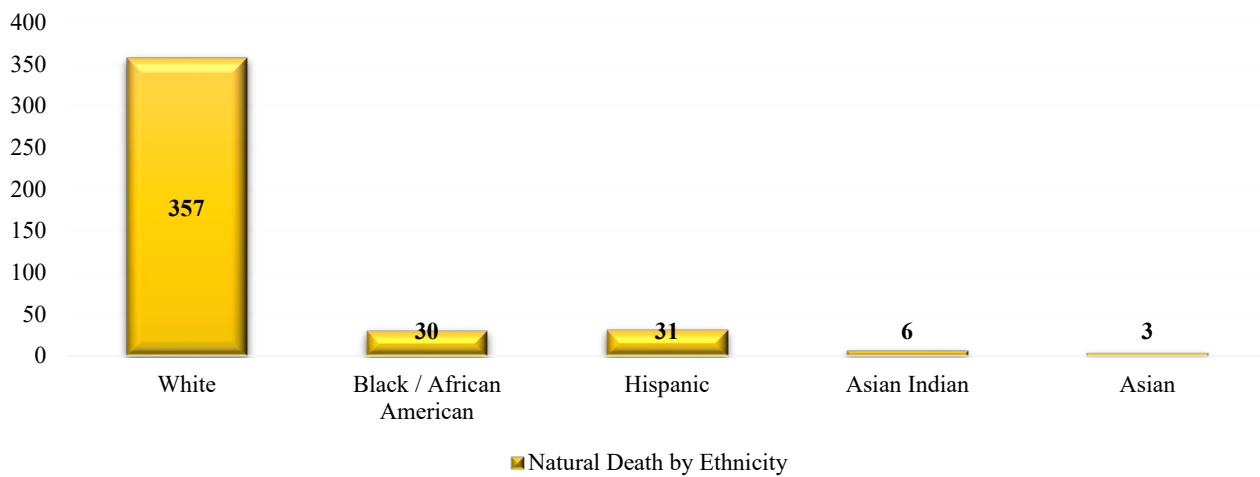


Natural Death

Natural Deaths - 10 Year Analysis



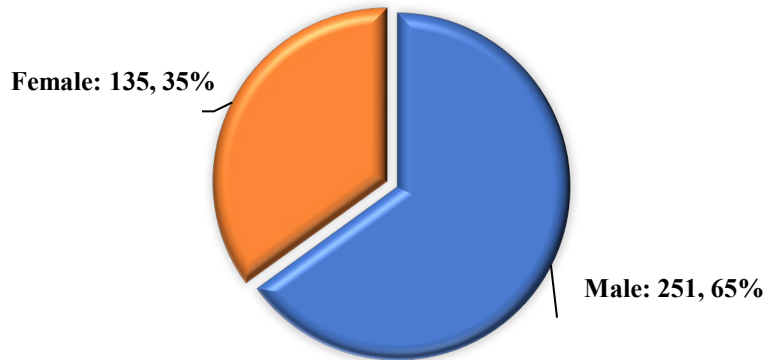
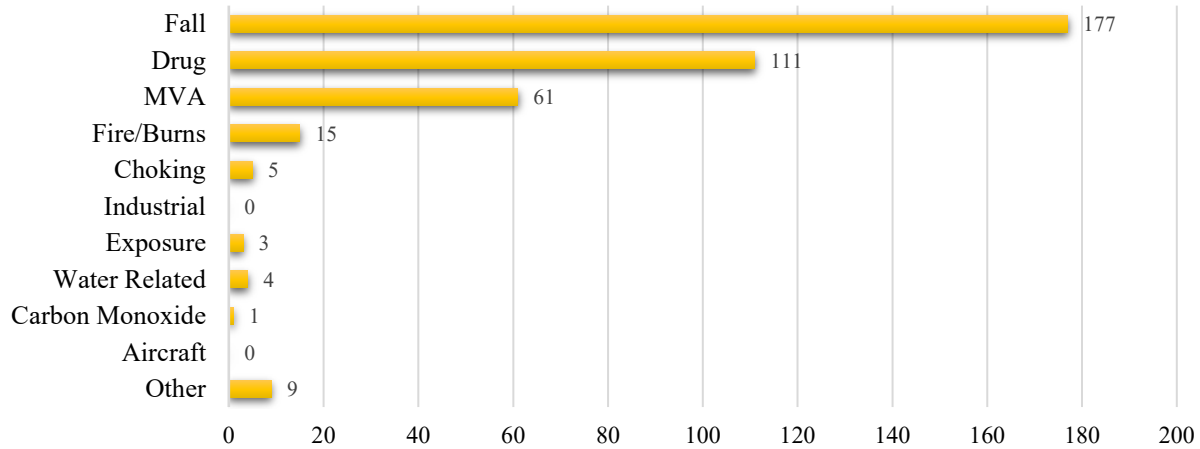
Natural Death by Ethnicity



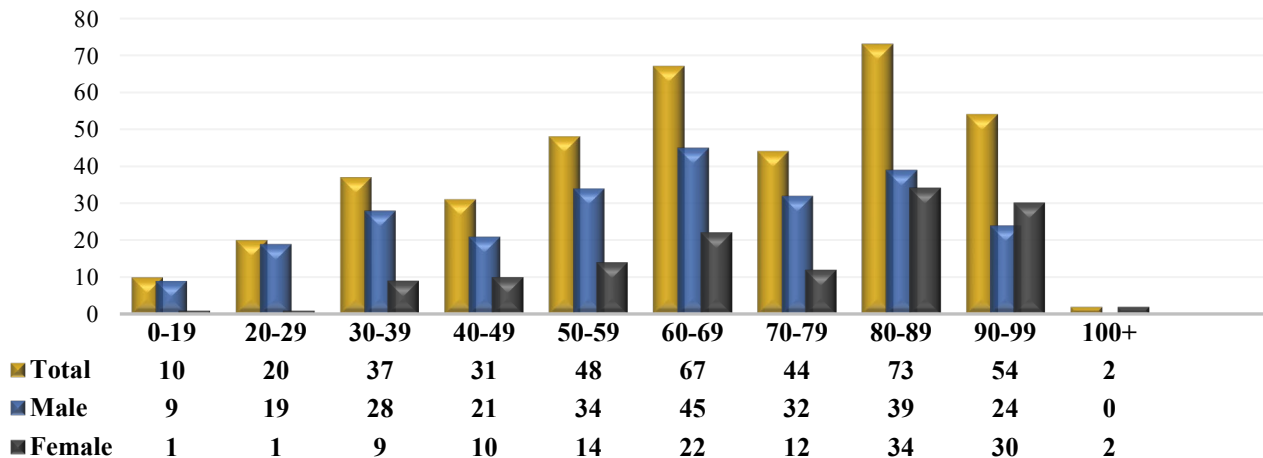
Accidental Death

Accidental deaths were the second highest category of investigations in 2024. Below are charts that break down modality, gender, and age.

Accidental Deaths by Modality

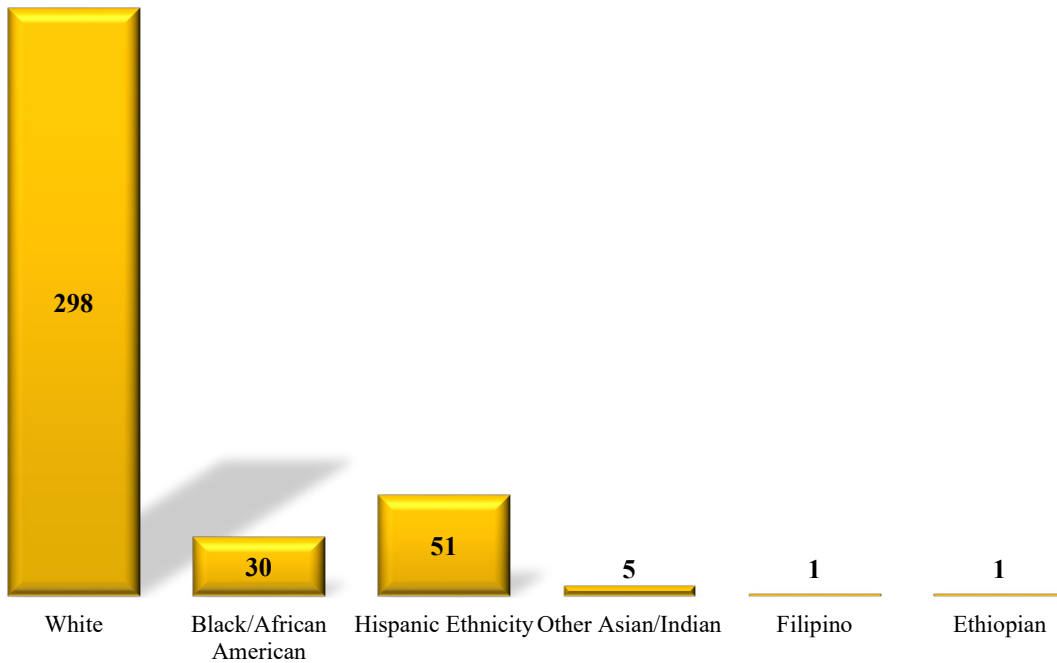


Accidental Deaths by Age

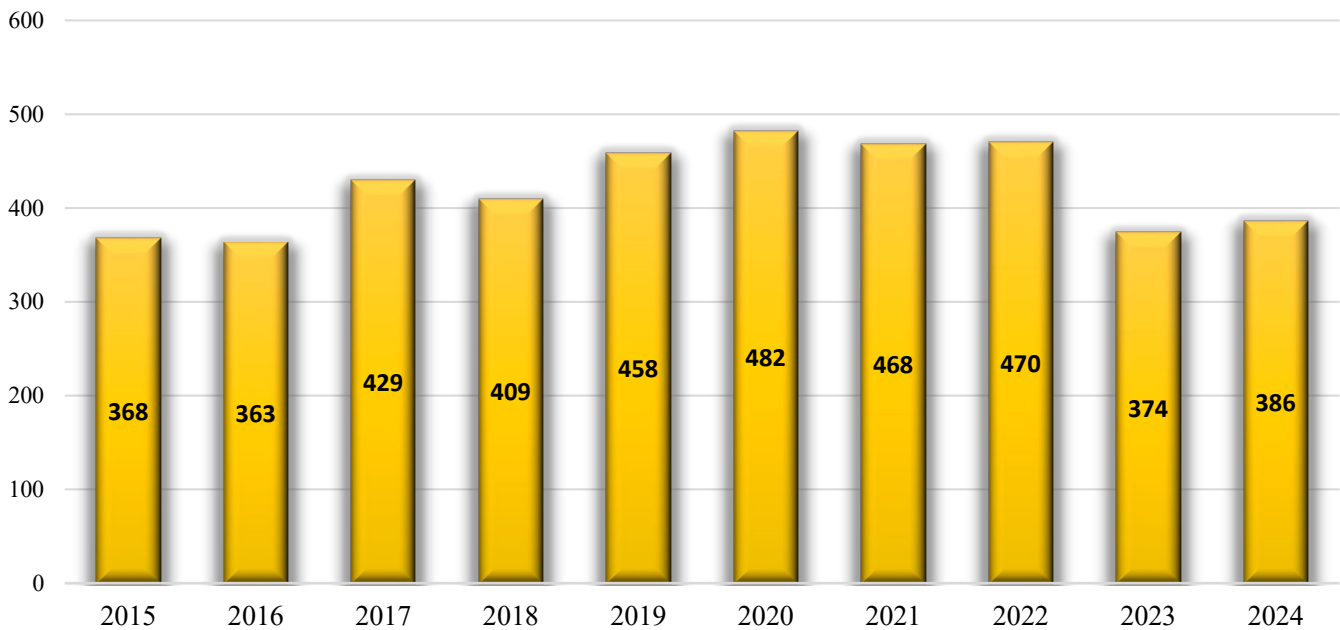


Accidental Death

Accidental Deaths by Ethnicity



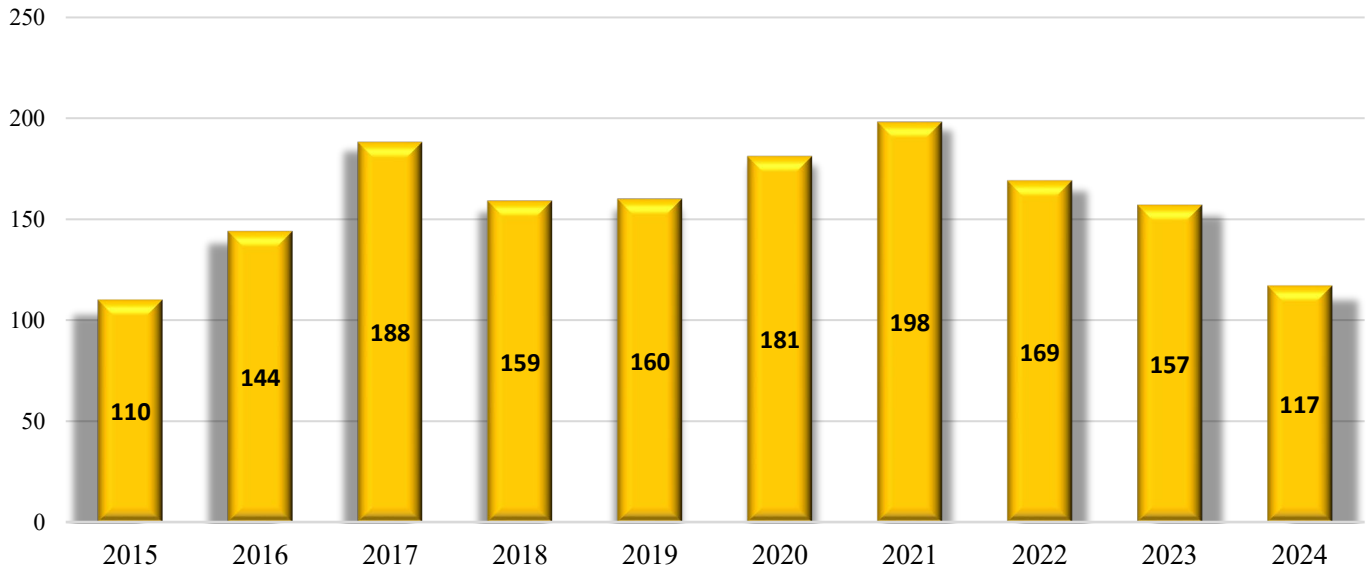
Accidental Deaths - 10 Year Analysis



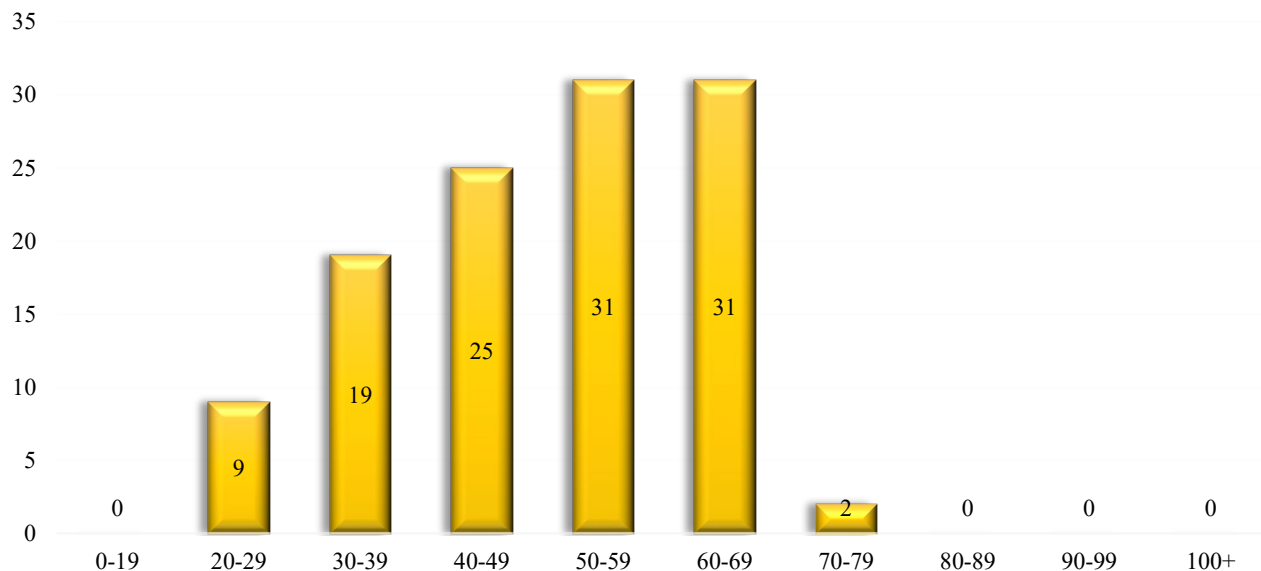
Drug Death

The second most common accident next to fall related deaths are drug related deaths. The Lehigh County Coroner's Office partners with the Allentown Health Bureau Opioid Task Force, Lehigh County Drug and Alcohol, Lehigh County District Attorney's Office, and multiple law enforcement agencies to continue to produce a positive impact on the current opioid crisis. There were 157 drug related deaths in 2023 and 117 in 2024, a decrease of 25%. Of those Drug Deaths 111 were ruled Accident and 6 were ruled Suicide.

Drug Death - 10 year Analysis



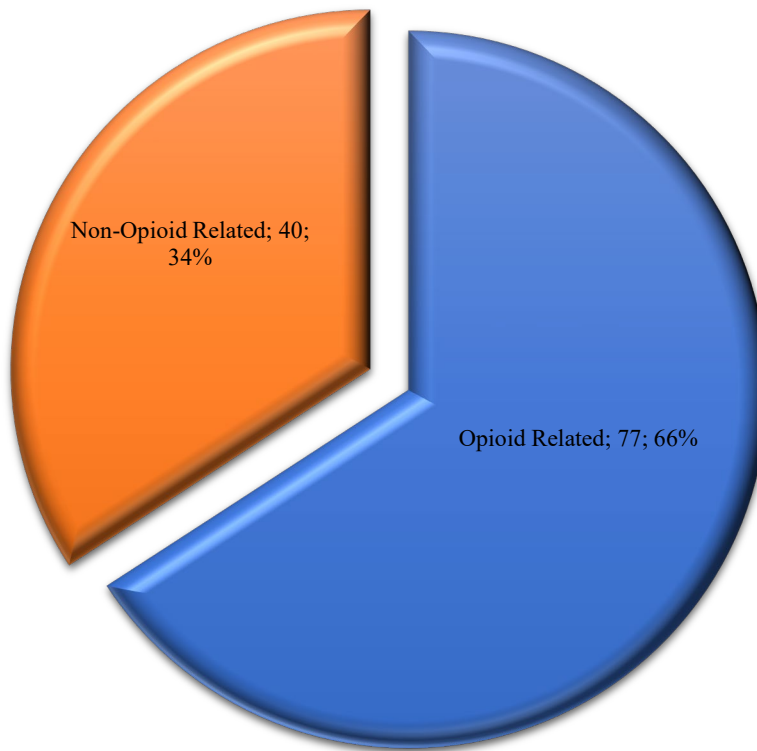
Drugs Deaths by Age



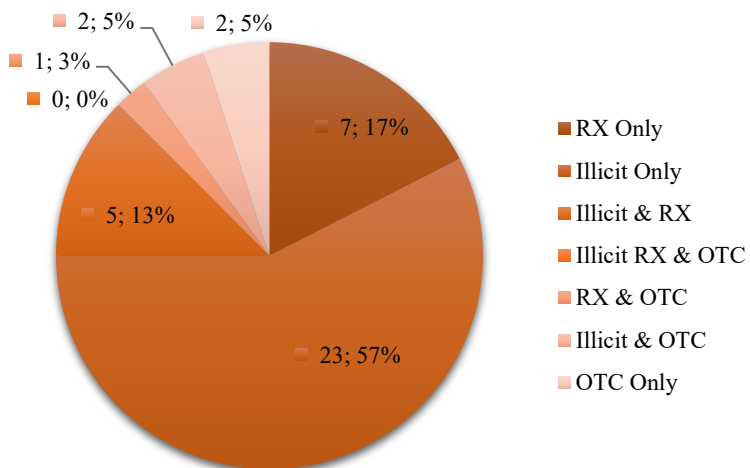
Drug Death

As illustrated in the charts, deaths related to opioids are either exclusive or in combination with cocaine, methamphetamine, prescription medications, or over-the-counter medications.

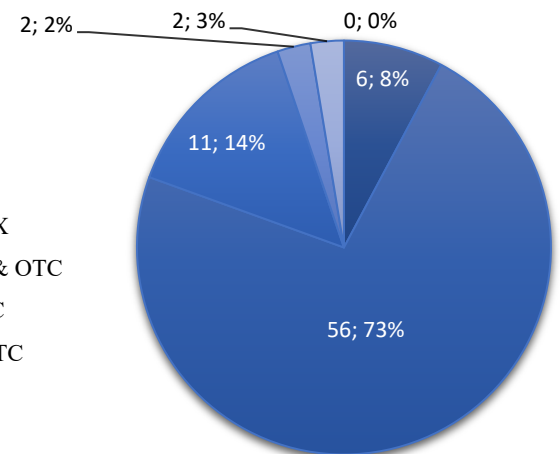
Opioid Involvement



Non-opioid related

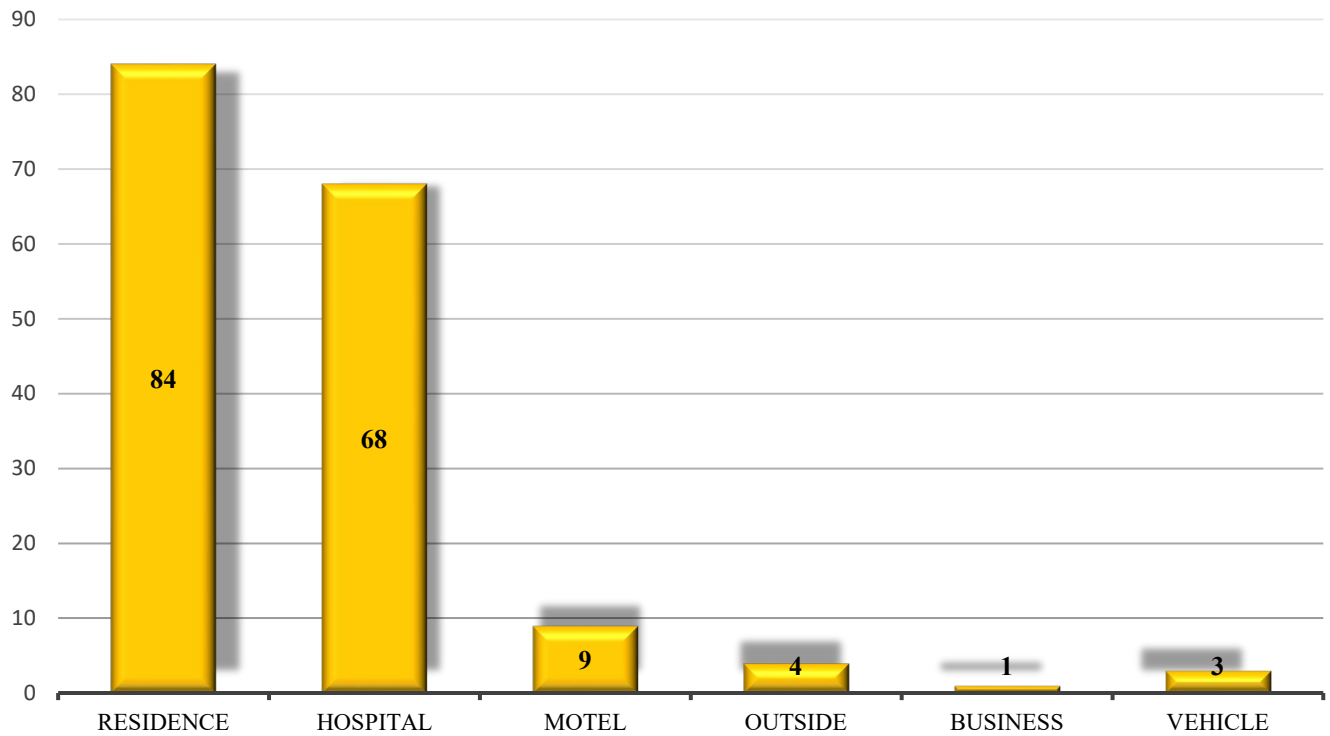


Opioid related

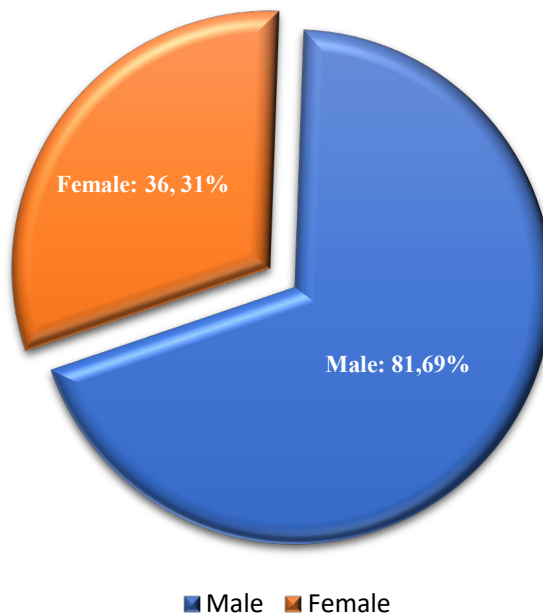


Drug Death

Place of Death



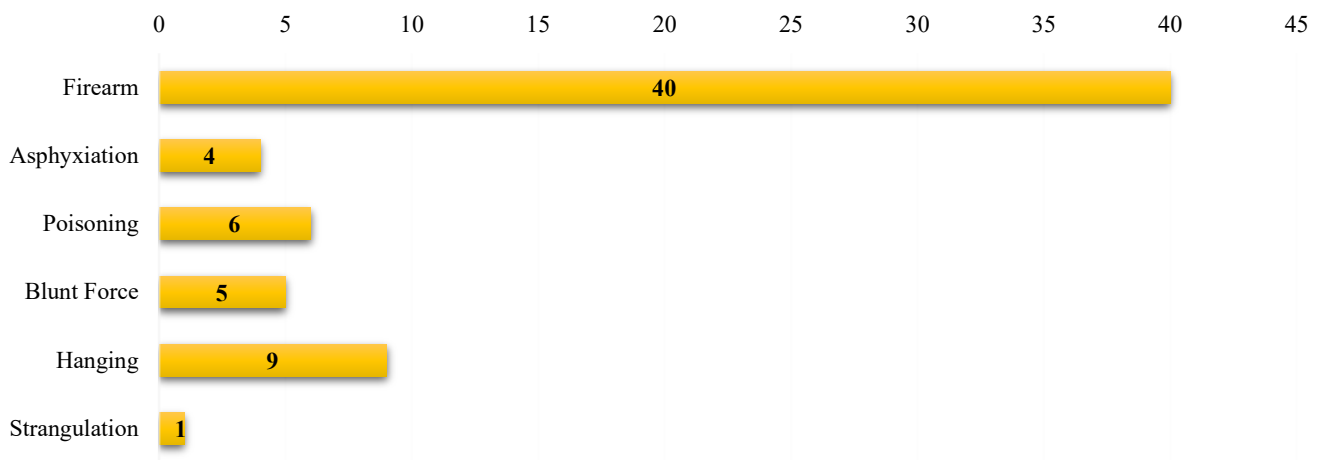
Drug Deaths by Gender



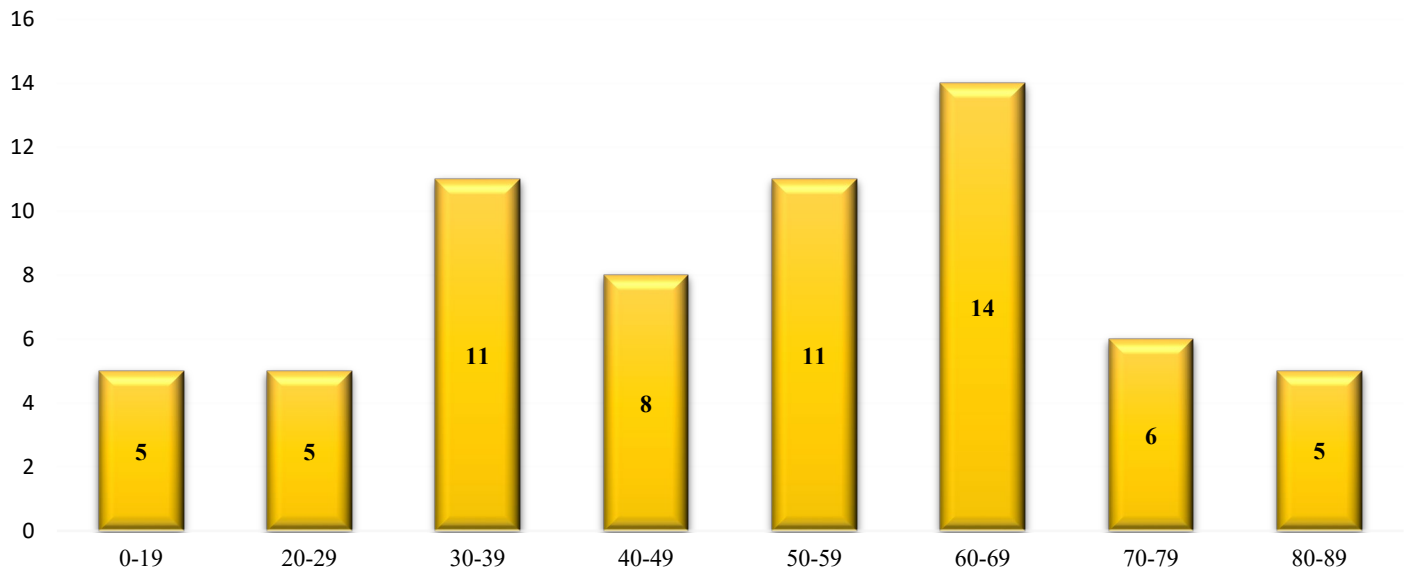
Suicide

Suicide is the result of self-inflicted injury with the intention of ending one's life, representing a profound tragedy that often carries an air of mystery. Key risk factors include depression, psychiatric disorders, substance misuse, chronic pain, and a familial history of suicide. Our office collaborates with the Suicide Prevention Coalition of the Allentown Health Bureau to enhance awareness and prevention efforts surrounding this critical issue. There were **65 suicide deaths** investigated in 2024.

Suicide by Modality

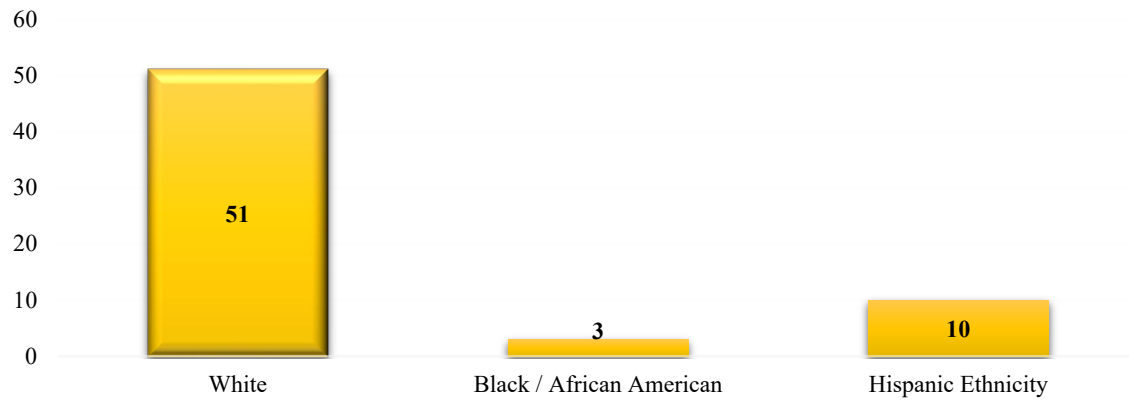


Suicides by Age

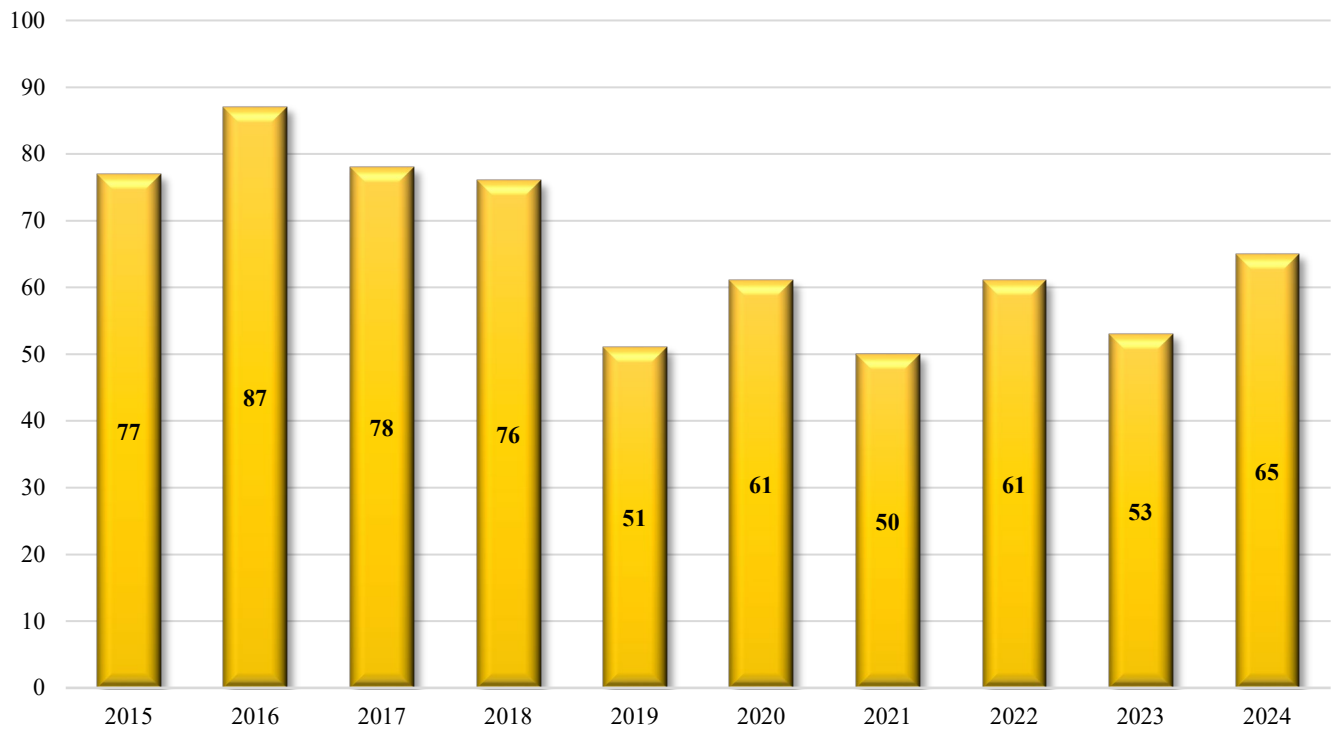


Suicide

Suicide by Race

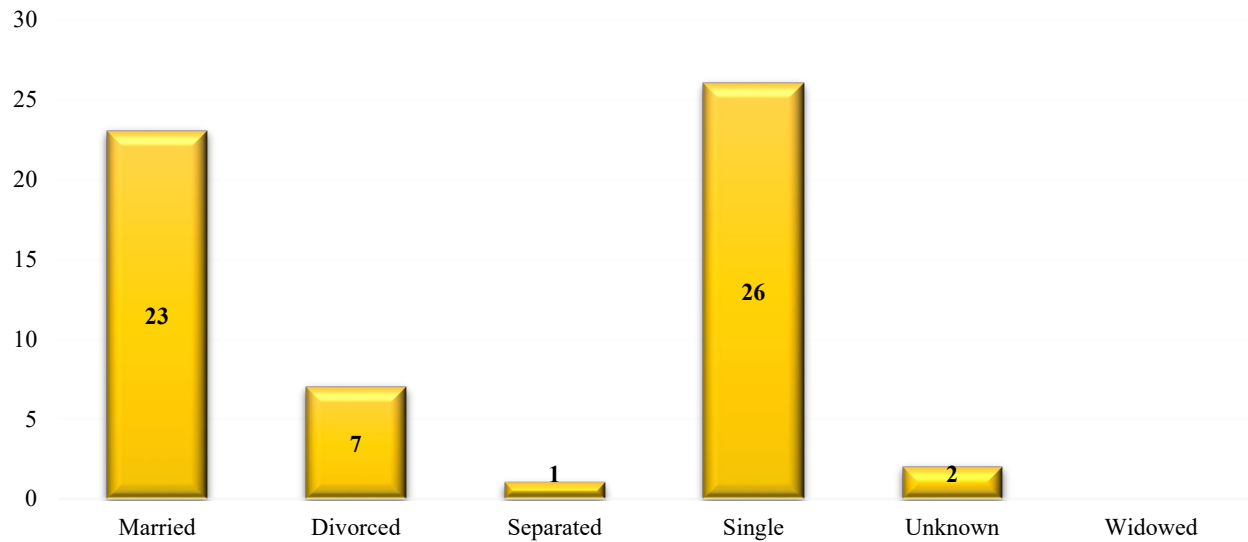


Suicide - 10 Year Analysis

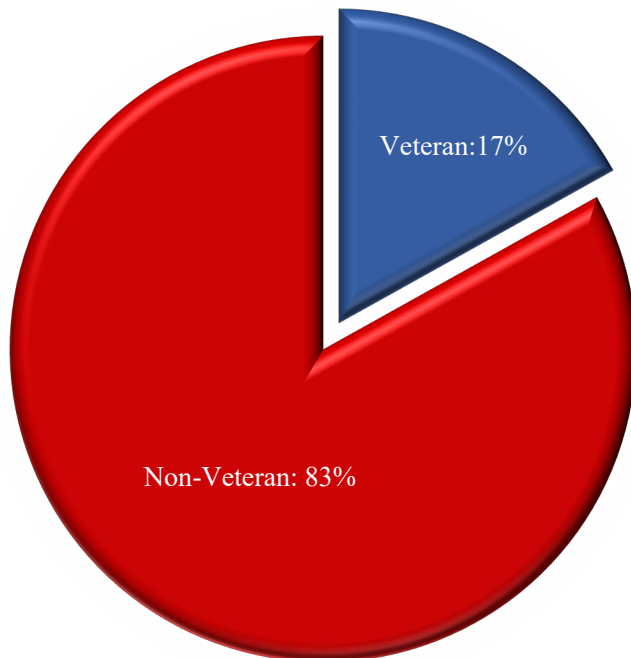


Suicide

Suicides by Marital Status

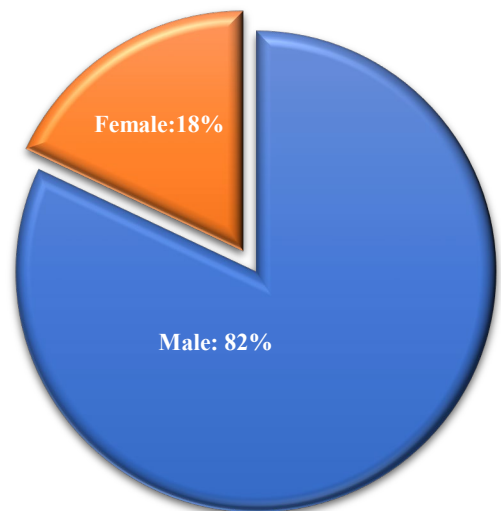


Suicides by Veteran Status



■ Veteran ■ Non-Veteran

Suicides by Gender

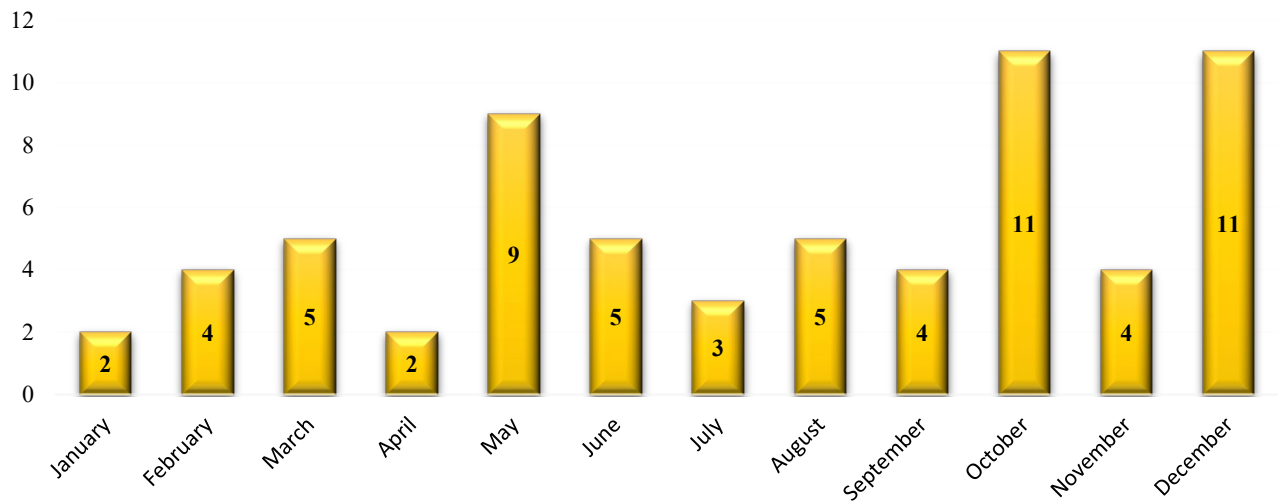


■ Male ■ Female

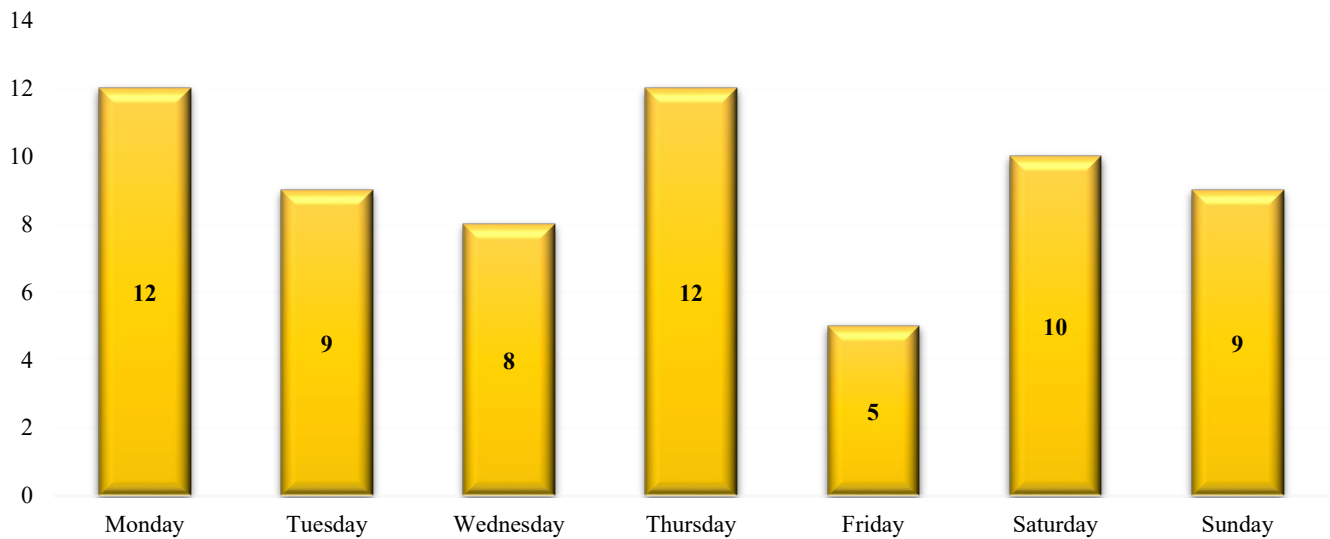


Suicide

Suicide by Incident Month



Suicide by Incident Day



Homicide

Homicide is defined as death at the hands of another. In medicolegal terminology, homicide may refer to a noncriminal act, as well as the criminal act of murder.

While a cause of death is often readily known in the early stages of a homicide investigation, an autopsy is always performed in order to document a full extent of injuries and collect additional evidence.

Homicides by Modality



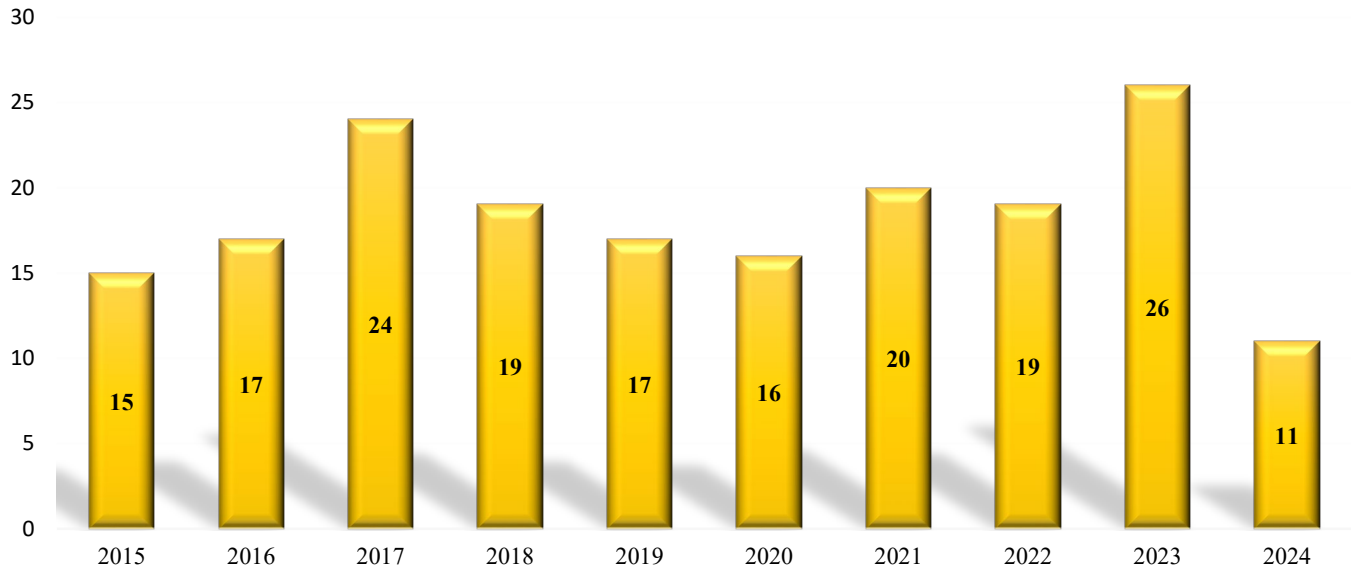
In 2024, 11 individuals died as result of a homicide. In all of these 11 cases, the incident and death occurred within Lehigh County. There were no out of county incidents that lead to death.



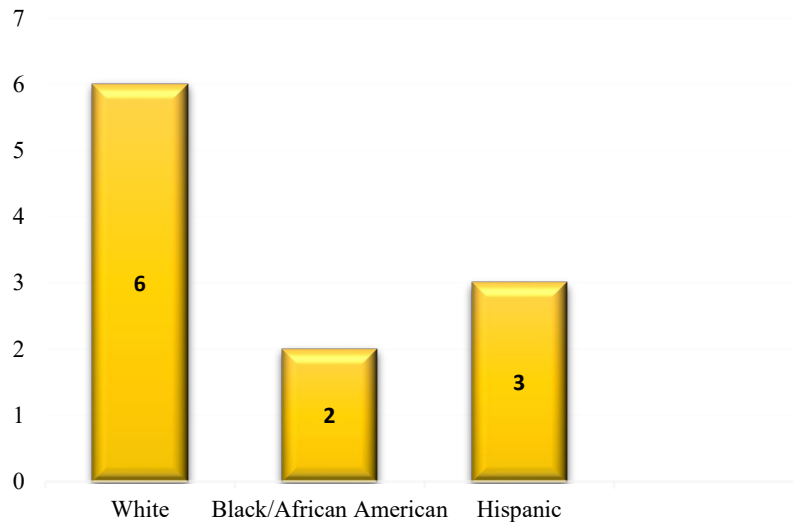
Homicide

The chart below is a 10-year analysis of homicide investigations conducted by the Lehigh County Coroner's Office, from 2015 through 2024. Firearm-related homicides constitute the majority of homicide deaths in Lehigh County, with gunshot wounds identified as the primary mechanism.

Homicide - 10 Year Analysis

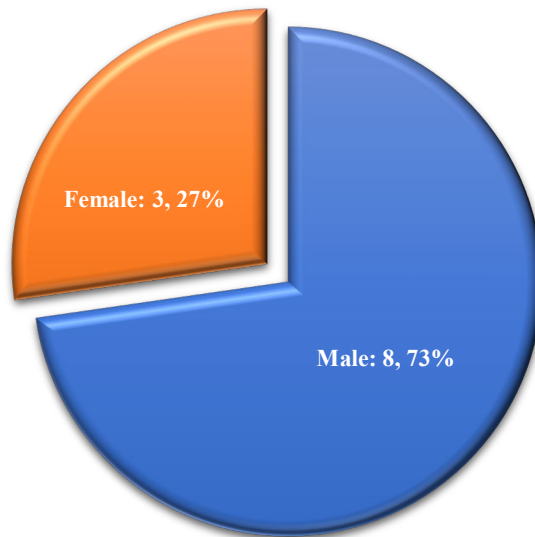


Homicide by Race

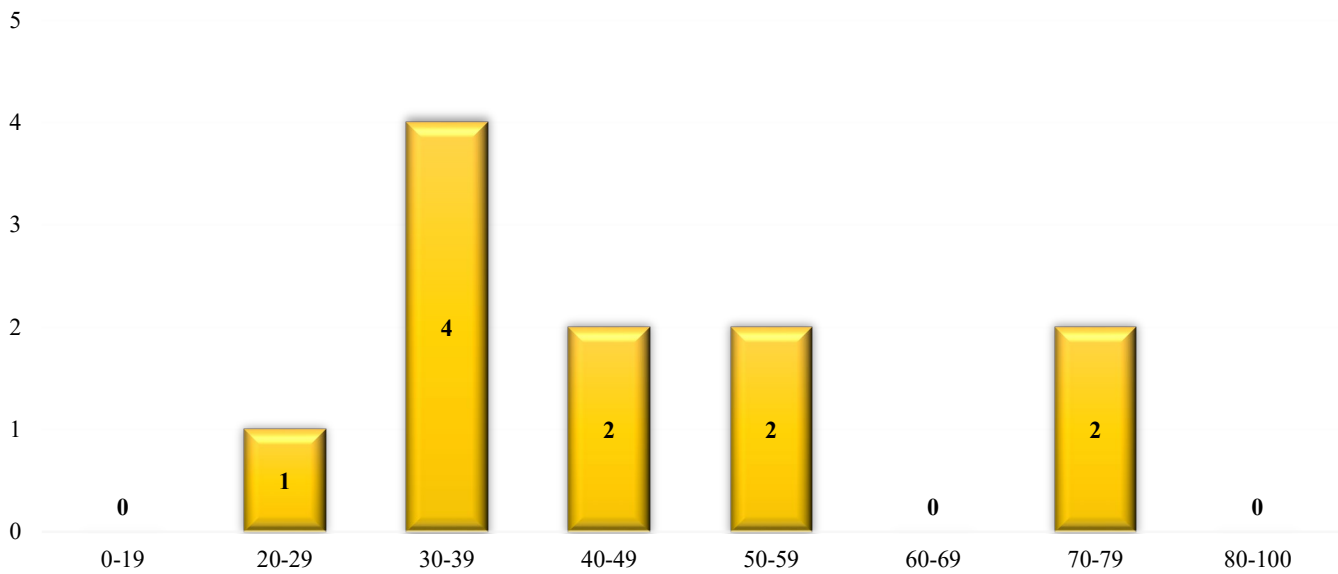


Homicide

Homicide by Gender



Homicides by Age and Gender



Meet Our Staff

Daniel A. Buglio, D-ABMDI Coroner

Coroner Buglio was appointed as the Lehigh County Coroner in April 2022 and was elected to the position in November 2023. He has been with the coroner's office since 1999, initially serving as a Deputy Coroner before being promoted to First Deputy Coroner and Operations Manager. Buglio has been a police officer since 1993. In addition to his law enforcement and investigative experience, Coroner Buglio has received training from several institutions, including Lehigh Carbon Community College, Mercyhurst University, Penn State University, and St. Louis University School of Medicine, as well as numerous other forensic training organizations. He is certified by the Pennsylvania Coroner's Education Board and holds national certification from the American Board of Medicolegal Death Investigators. Coroner Buglio is also a member of the International Association of Coroners and Medical Examiners, and he serves on the Lehigh County Child Death Review Team and the Lehigh County Elder Abuse Task Force.

Cassandra L. Schiffner, D-ABMDI Chief of Investigations

Cassie has been with the Coroner's Office since January of 2017. She started as a part-time deputy, making her way to full-time and eventually through the ranks to Chief of Investigations. Cassie has a Bachelor's Degree in Criminal Justice from DeSales University and has previous experience working in a bio skills cadaver lab, as well as 7 years as an Orthodontist assistant. Cassie remains a dedicated employee and looks forward to continuing to assist the residents of Lehigh County in their time of need.

Gabrielle R. Riley, D-ABMDI Operations Manager

Gabby has been employed with the Coroner's Office since December of 2014. She started as a part-time Morgue Technician and that position transitioned into full-time in January of 2016. She then moved into a full-time Deputy Coroner position in July of 2016 and obtained her ABMDI certification in February of 2020. Gabby was recently promoted to Operations Manager in September of 2024. Gabby was also employed as an Eye Recovery Technician Trainer for the Lions World Vision Institute from 2013 through 2024. Outside of work Gabby enjoys spending time with her 2-year-old son, Tristan.

Richard B. Pender, D-ABMDI Chief Deputy Coroner

Rick is entering his 19th year of service, previously serving as Deputy Coroner, Office Supervisor, and Morgue Operations Manager. In 2012, he obtained his certification as Diplomat with the American Board of Medicolegal Death Investigators. He is a former Police Officer from the City of Rahway, New Jersey; in addition to serving as a funeral director for twelve years. Rick is a member of the Bethany Wesleyan Church, Cherryville, where he serves with the Missions Committee. Rick and his wife Shelly, reside in Washington Township. They enjoy spending their spare time with their five children and three grandchildren.

Miles D. Wildey Assistant Chief of Investigations

Miles joined the Coroner's Office in February 2024, bringing six years of experience with Lehigh County, coupled with a background in corrections and service in the Marine Corps. Outside of his professional endeavors, he enjoys snowboarding and playing golf.

Kelly Dickinson Executive Assistant/Deputy Coroner

Kelly has been the Executive Assistant since March of 2022 and had previously been a part-time Deputy Coroner since 2015. In addition to her role in the Coroner's Office, Kelly has a background with 20 years of experience in Emergency Medical Services. 15 of those years was served as Paramedic for the residents of Lehigh County.



Meet Our Staff

Craig A. Hanzl, D-ABMDI Senior Investigator

Craig has been married for 35 years with two daughters and three grandchildren. He has been employed with the Coroner's Office since 2008 and certified as an American Board of Medicolegal Death Investigators since 2009. Prior to working at the Coroner's Office, Craig worked for 19 years with Lehigh Valley Health Network at the Cedar Crest location in the Emergency Department. Craig is also a volunteer with the Whitehall Fire Department since 1996, progressing through the ranks up to Assistant Chief before moving to becoming a member of the fire department's Investigative Team, which investigates the cause and origin of fire. Craig is also a member of the Whitehall Fire Department's Water Rescue/Recovery Team.

Dywane K. Harris, D-AMBDI Senior Investigator

Dywane has been with the Coroner's Office since 2018, initially starting as part-time and becoming full-time in 2021. Prior to joining the Coroner's Office, Dywane worked for 34 years in the New Jersey State Medical Examiner's Office, until his retirement in 2021. Dywane started his career with the NJ Medical Examiner's Office in 1987 and made his way through the ranks to become Chief Investigator in Morris County in 1991. In 2011, Dywane became the Northern Regional Chief of Morris, Sussex, and Warren Counties in New Jersey. During his time as an investigator in New Jersey, Dywane had the opportunity to visit and train throughout the country, most notably, an investigation that took place in Russia, having the chance to observe and photograph an autopsy. "Out of all the years of experience I have as a death investigator, working with the Lehigh County Coroner's Office really makes it comfortable with a family like atmosphere. It makes the job so appreciative because of the leadership and staff".

Dylan Lehman Investigator

Dylan attended Lehigh Carbon Community College and Cecil College from 2019-2022. In October of 2023, Dylan was hired and sworn in as a Deputy Coroner with the Lehigh County Coroner's Office. In December of 2024, he obtained the Pennsylvania Certification from the Coroner's Education Board. "I am proud to serve the people of Lehigh County and honored to be a part of something much greater than ourselves".

David Shuster Investigator

Dave joined our team as a Deputy Coroner in August of 2024. Prior to coming to the Coroner's Office, Dave was a Senior Research Manager in the Department of Veterinary Sciences at Bristol Myers Squibb in Princeton, New Jersey, where he managed a team of scientists conducting pharmacology studies in rodents, rabbits, and non-human primates. Dave's background in Forensic Sciences stems from his years working for the New Jersey State Medical Examiner's Office where he began his career as a forensic autopsy technician and removal driver, before becoming a field investigator for the Essex County Medical Examiner's Office.

Waldo Santana Investigator

Waldo joined the Coroner's Office in October of 2024, bringing in a diverse background in community service. Waldo has previously contributed to the Lehigh Valley Chamber of Commerce and worked at a doctor's office specializing in geriatric care. Waldo is a local graduate, driven with passion for helping others and is committed to making a positive impact within his community.

Jamie Zanelli Investigator

Jamie is a Registered Nurse who earned her Masters of Science in Nursing Degree from Chamberlain University. Jamie started with the Coroner's Office in September of 2024.



Meet our Staff

Stephen J. Kiefer Investigator

Steve has been in emergency services since the age of 14, serving as an EMT and Firefighter in the Lehigh Valley. Steve has been a police officer since 2013, and spent the last 4 years as a Detective, investigating child abuse cases before coming to the Coroner's Office in July of 2024. Steve is married and has a beautiful two-year-old daughter

Alexandra Schailey Investigator

Lexie holds a Bachelor's Degree in Criminal Justice and has a strong passion for forensic work. Lexie spent three years holding a career in the pharmaceutical industry, gaining anatomical and medical knowledge and hands on lab experience. This professional background led her to the Coroner's Office in October of 2024, where she's been able to vastly expand her knowledge in the forensic field as a whole.

Troy Adams Investigator

Troy Adams has been working for the Coroner's Office since February of 2024. He has a degree in Forensic Science from Penn State and spent years working in DNA and Toxicology units with both private and state laboratories. "I look forward to continuing to serve the people of Lehigh County with honor and compassion".

Rebecca Douglas Investigator

Rebecca became a Deputy Coroner in March of 2014, completing the Coroner's Basic Education Course in November of 2015. She studied Criminal Justice in college and became a Certified Municipal Police Officer in 2010. Rebecca had worked for Slatington Borough Police Department upon graduation of the police academy and has currently been employed as a Certified Police Officer for the Catasauqua Police Department since February of 2011, where she received multiple Letters of Commendation, and a Life Saving Medal. Rebecca returned to the Coroner's Office in June of 2022 as a full-time Deputy Coroner and is working towards completion of her National Board D-ABMDI Certification. Rebecca has advanced training in Crime Scene Photography, Evidence Handling, Fingerprinting, and Drug Identification.

Edward Zucal Administrative Investigator

Ed joined the Coroner's Office on February 22, 1995. Ed began his part-time career here while working full-time as an Allentown Police Officer. Ed retired from his police career in 2016. He graduated from the Attorney General Coroner's Education Class and is also a Diplomat with the American Board of Medicolegal Death Investigator. Ed is in the office at night and enjoys being able to help his fellow deputies. He enjoys taking his 1922 Ford Model T to car shows and attending stock car races. He has no intentions on leaving us any time soon.

Rachel Tallarico-Kresge, D-AMBDI Senior Investigator (part-time)

Rachel has been a deputy coroner for 7 years and has her D-AMBDI certification. Prior to starting at the Coroner's Office, she served as a military police officer in the United States Army and received a degree in funeral directing through the Pittsburgh Institute of Mortuary Science. In July of 2024, her and her husband welcomed their first baby, Ethan!



Meet Our Staff

Jason Nicholas, D-ABMDI Senior Investigator (part-time)

Jason has been a Deputy Coroner for 24 years. He and his wife Anne Marie reside in Towamensing Township, Carbon County with their Golden Retrievers Brantley, Bailey, Amy, and Nikki. Jason is an avid Philadelphia Eagles Fan and always attends multiple games each season with his wife or friends. Jason has been an Emergency Medical Technician for the past 30 years, and also serves with the Slatington Fire Department, currently as their Deputy Fire Chief. In his free time, Jason enjoys taking care of his lawn when in season, attending Nascar races, and supporting the Delaware Valley Golden Retriever Rescue where he and Anne Marie rescue all of their dogs from.

Megan Williams Investigator (part-time)

Megan is a mother to two children and a soccer coach. She has worked with dogs for 20 years at various shelters and training facilities. Megan left the dog training world for the Coroner's Office and has been a part of the team as a part time deputy since October of 2023.

Jennifer Huaman Morgue Technician/Investigator

Jenn has been with the Coroner's Office since August of 2022. She has two children; her daughter is a teacher and her son is in the Army, currently deployed overseas in Germany. In her free time, she enjoys going to the movies with her husband and taking their 11-month-old Bernedoodle named Finn for walks in the dog park.

Maryanne Lutz Morgue Technician

Maryanne has been with the Coroner's Office since July of 2016 as the morgue technician. Maryanne graduated from DeSales University with both a Bachelor's and Master's Degree in Criminal Justice. She completed the Pennsylvania Coroner's Basic Education Course in 2017. Her ability to collect fingerprints and use of the IR/UV camera has assisted in identification on numerous death investigations. She has a passion for house plants and gardening and helped save numerous office plants, most recently keeping our office Christmas tree alive and well.

Alexandra Cortese Bereavement Coordinator

Alex has been with the Coroner's Office since May of 2024 as a Bereavement Coordinator. Her experience in social work and forensic investigations has allowed her to act as a liaison between residents, various government agencies, and community resource providers. Alex has a special interest in searches for family members for the deceased and locating their Next-of-Kin. Her goal at the Coroner's Office is to provide assistance and support to families experiencing grief or loss at any stage.

Jessica Tirpak Bereavement Coordinator

Jessica specializes in supporting families who have lost a loved one in Lehigh County. Jess has a degree in Criminal Justice and also works as a Substance Abuse Counselor doing Maintenance Therapy. Jess has three sons, Gregg, Tanner, and Hunter.



Summary

In conclusion, I would like to extend my heartfelt appreciation to all. To the Board of Commissioners and Administration, your support and confidence in me are both reassuring and truly humbling. I would like to take this opportunity to express my heartfelt appreciation to all those who have confidence in my abilities and support my role as your Lehigh County Coroner.

If you require any further clarification or have questions regarding the content of this report, please do not hesitate to contact me at your earliest opportunity.

This report is provided to;

- County of Lehigh – Administration
- County of Lehigh – Board of Commissioners
- County of Lehigh – Judiciary
- County of Lehigh – Row Officers
- Various boards and committees

This report is also available on the website of the Office of the Coroner;
www.lehighcounty.org/Departments/Coroner

This report has been provided in electronic format. If you require a printed format, please contact my office.

This report was prepared by Assistant Chief of Investigations Miles Wildey and Chief of Investigations Cassandra Schiffner, D-ABMDI and Chief Deputy Coroner Richard Pender, D-ABMDI.

Respectfully,

Daniel A. Buglio, D-ABMDI
Lehigh County Coroner

