

Jefferson Parish Coroner



Annual Report 2013

Jefferson Parish Coroner's Office
2018 8th Street
Harvey, Louisiana 70058



Accredited by the
National Association of
Medical Examiners

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Message to the Jefferson Parish Council and the Citizens of Jefferson Parish

Across the United States there are varying systems for performing death investigations. The vast majority are Coroner systems with the others being either a Medical Examiner system or a hybrid of the two. Qualifications also vary widely and are set be either the state or local jurisdiction.

According to Louisiana law, in each parish there shall be a Coroner. Except for the Parish of Orleans, he shall be elected at the gubernatorial election and shall serve a four year term. The Coroner shall be a physician licensed to practice medicine in the State of Louisiana. This requirement shall be waived in any parish in which no licensed physician qualifies to run for office. The Coroner may appoint the staff necessary to carry out the duties of the office.

In Louisiana the Coroner is charged with the responsibility of investigating sudden, violent, unexpected and suspicious deaths that occur in his jurisdiction. Unlike Coroner and Medical Examiner systems in other states, Louisiana law also requires that the Coroner provide for the involuntary commitment of patients suffering from mental illness and for the examination of victims of sex crimes. Because all three of these issues occur around the clock, the Jefferson Parish Coroner's Office team is available 24 hours a day, 365 days per year.

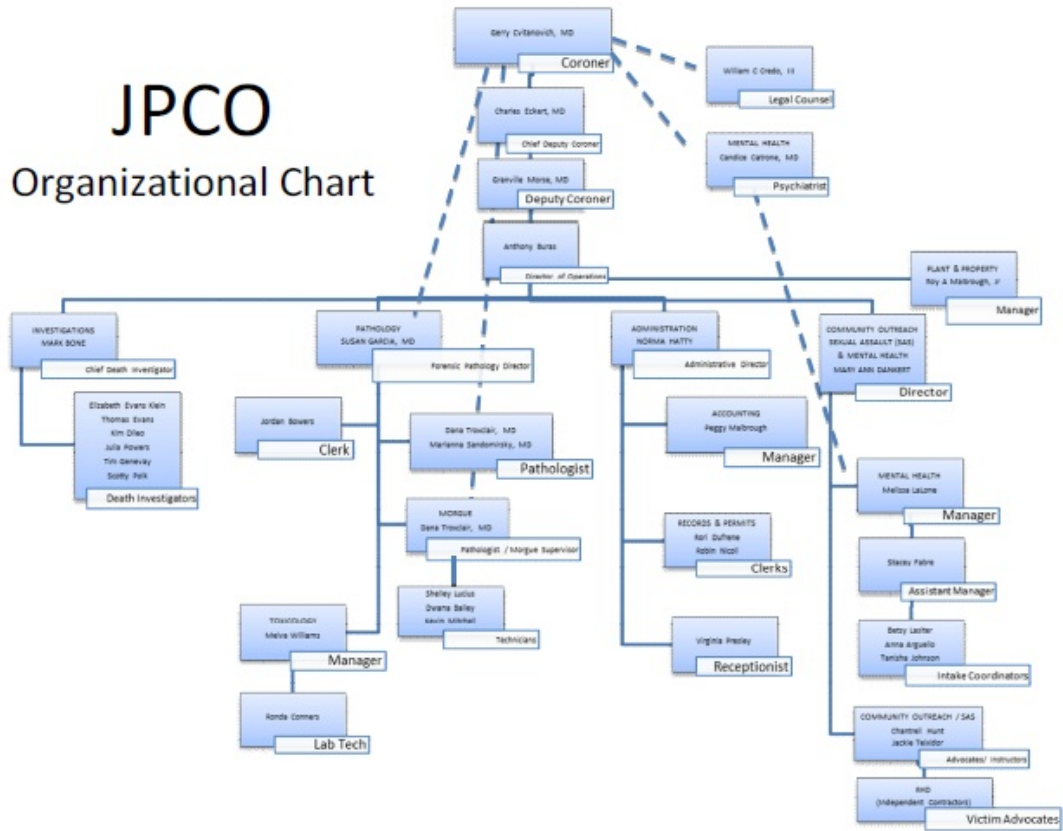
The most visible and well known function of the Coroner is that of death investigation. The main duty of the Coroner and his staff is to determine the cause and manner of death. The cause of death is the disease process that or injury that results in death. The manner of death is a classification in which a determination is made regarding whether the death resulted from natural causes, homicide, suicide or an accident. In some instances the manner of death may be undetermined. The Coroner (and staff) certifies the death after investigation and postmortem examination and issues the death certificate as required by law. Information and evidence collected during the investigation may help lead to the arrest or conviction in criminal cases. Statistical information collected by the Coroner's Office regarding all three phases of work are also utilized by numerous agencies including but not limited to the Louisiana Office of Vital Records and the National Center for Disease Control.

In 2013, Jefferson Parish Coroner Dr. Gerry Cvitanovich embarked on a new and ambitious program of community outreach in the Jefferson Parish School System. Along with other organizations, Dr. Cvitanovich hopes to reach out to our youth and stem the rising tide of drug and suicide related death.

The Jefferson Parish Coroner's Office is an independent, scientific body whose goal is to enhance public health and safety for the citizens of Jefferson Parish. The Office shall strive to provide timely, accurate determinations of cause and manner of death by maintaining the highest standards in the field of death investigation. The Office shall also strive to provide guidance, dignity and compassion to the mentally ill and their families and to protect all victims of sexual assault.

Organizational Chart

JPCO Organizational Chart



Types of Deaths Reportable to the Coroner's Office

As per Louisiana RS 13:5713 (A), he must either view the body or conduct an investigation when one of the following fourteen situations occur:

- (1) Suspicious, unexpected, or unusual deaths.
- (2) Sudden or violent deaths.
- (3) Deaths due to unknown or obscure causes or in any unusual manner.
- (4) Bodies found dead.
- (5) Deaths without an attending physician within thirty-six hours prior to the hour of death.
- (6) Deaths due to suspected suicide or homicide.
- (7) Deaths in which poison is suspected.
- (8) Any death from natural causes occurring in a hospital under twenty-four hours admission unless seen by a physician in the last thirty-six hours.
- (9) Deaths following an injury or accident either old or recent.
- (10) Deaths due to drowning, hanging, burns, electrocution, gunshot wounds, stabs or cutting, lightning, starvation, radiation, exposure, alcoholism, addiction, tetanus, strangulation, suffocation, or smothering.
- (11) Deaths due to trauma from whatever cause.
- (12) Deaths due to criminal means or by casualty.
- (13) Deaths in prison or while serving a sentence.
- (14) Deaths due to virulent contagious disease that might be caused by or cause a public hazard, including acquired immune deficiency syndrome.

Other Coroner Responsibilities

Mental Health: The Coroner is responsible for the involuntary commitment of those persons who are either mentally ill or suffering from substance abuse and are in need of immediate treatment to protect themselves or others from physical harm.

Sexual Assault Services: The Coroner or his designee shall examine all alleged victims of rape, carnal knowledge, sexual battery, incest and crime against nature when such cases are under police investigation.

Jefferson Parish Coroner's Office Cases (Death Investigations)

Population (2012 census)	433,676
Cases Reported to Medical Examiner	2864
A. Number of deaths certified after postmortem examination	485
1. Number of Medical Examiner Cases with Complete Autopsy	424
2. Number of Medical Examiner Cases with External Examination	61
B. Number of deaths certified without postmortem examination	320
C. Number of deaths not certified by Coroner's Office after investigation	2061
D. Number of Death Scene Investigations	450
E. Number of unidentified bodies after investigation	0
F. Number of exhumations	0

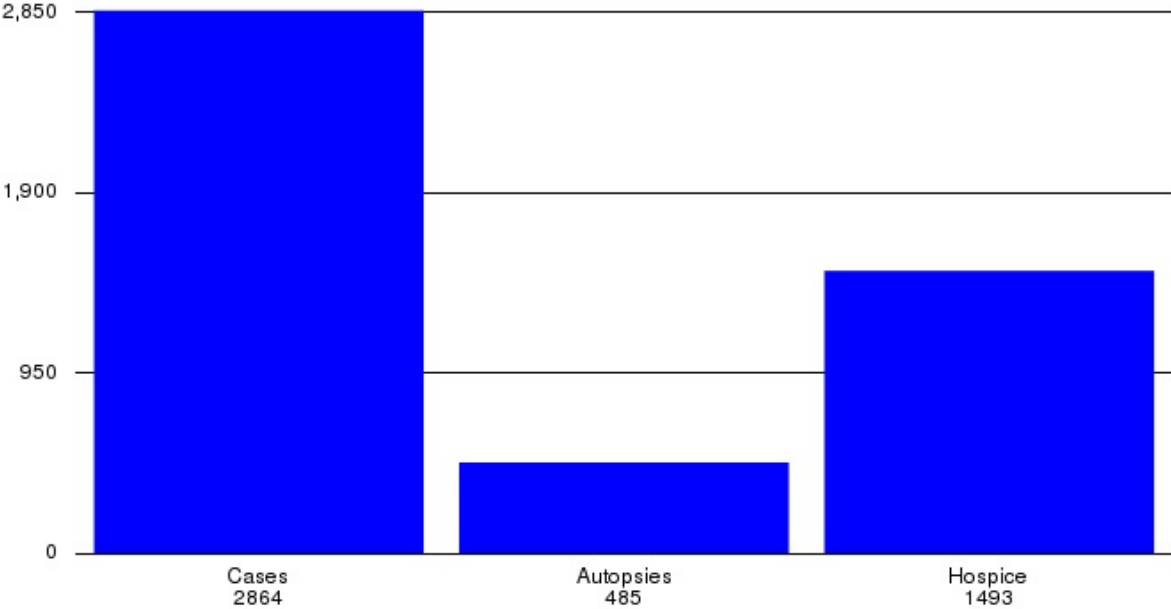
Definitions

Full Autopsy: A complete external and internal examination of a decedent with toxicological analysis.

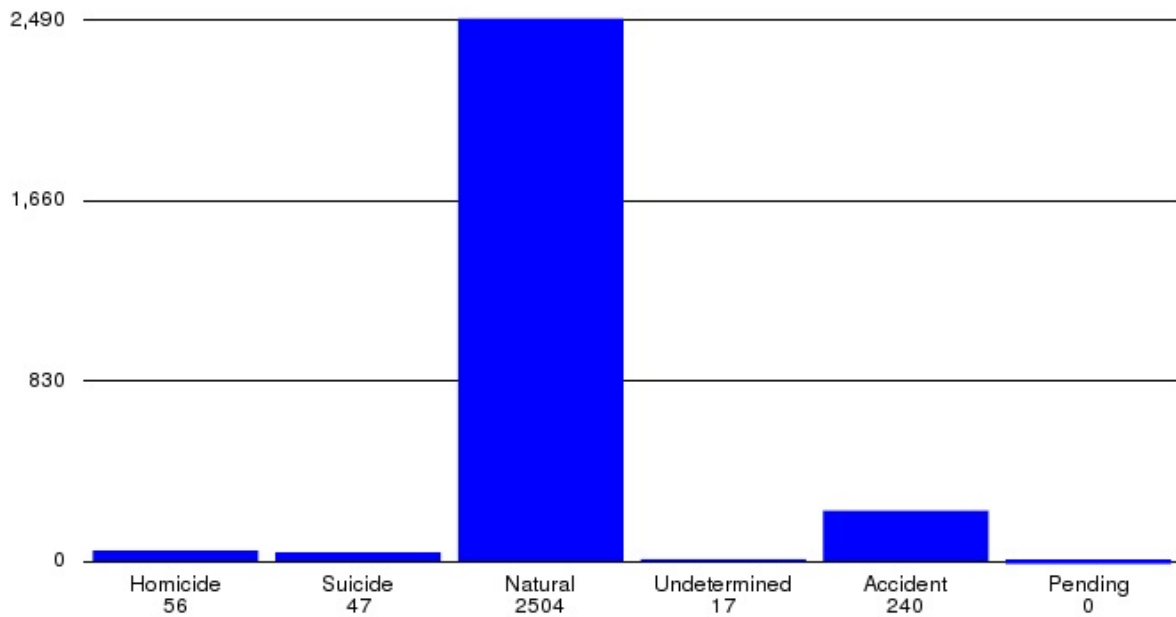
External Examination: An examination of the exterior of a decedent with toxicological analysis.

Death Scene Investigation: Pertinent circumstantial and physical observations are documented and photographed and items of evidence are collected in accordance to state law, good forensic principles and accreditation requirements established by the N.A.M.E. and the standards of ABMDI.

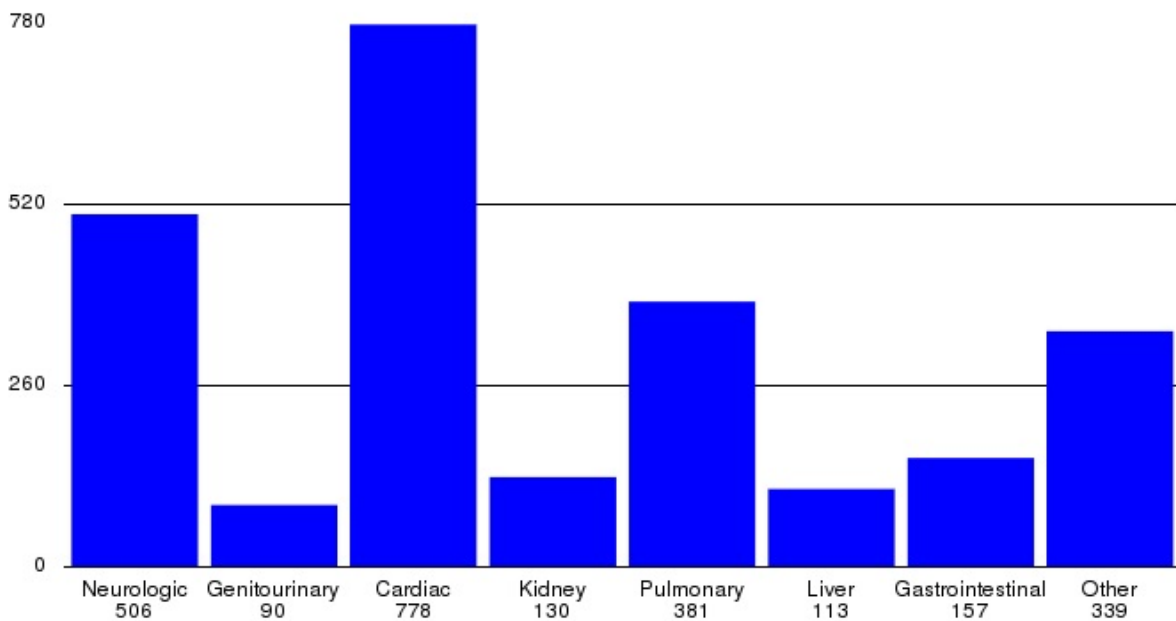
Summary



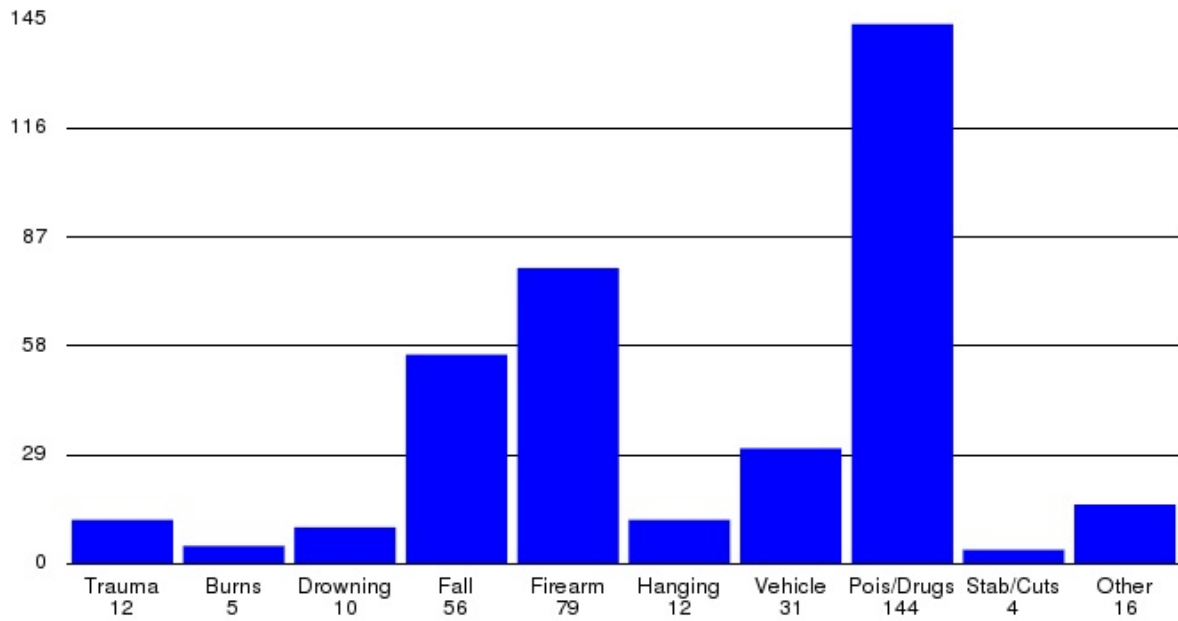
Manner of Death by Postmortem Examination



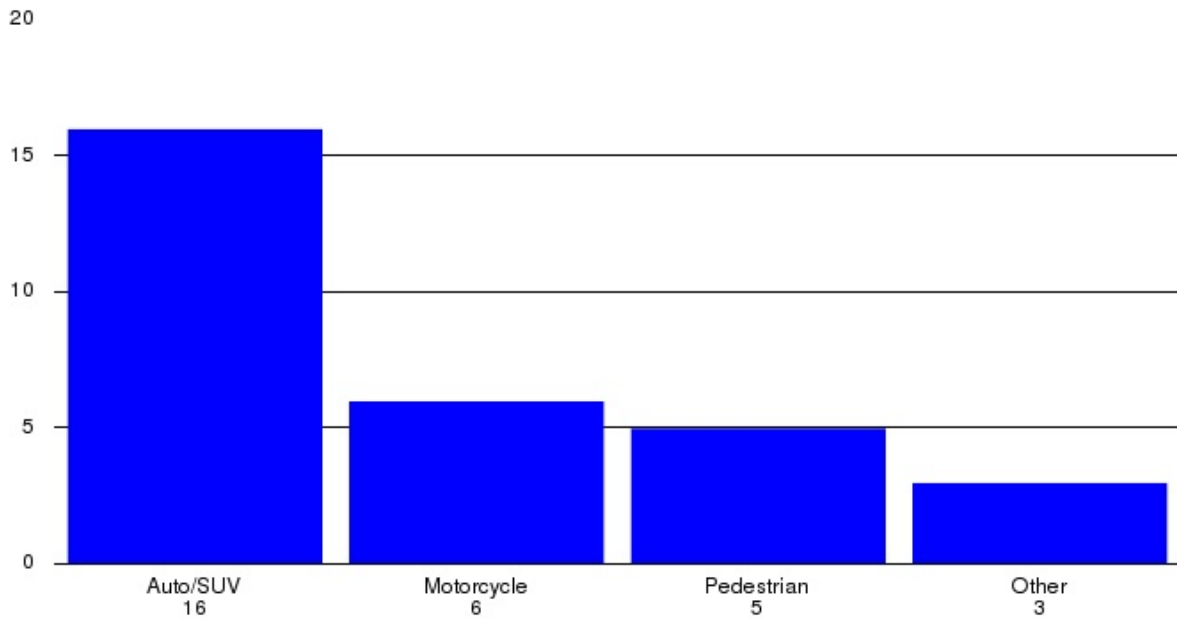
Deaths by Natural Causes



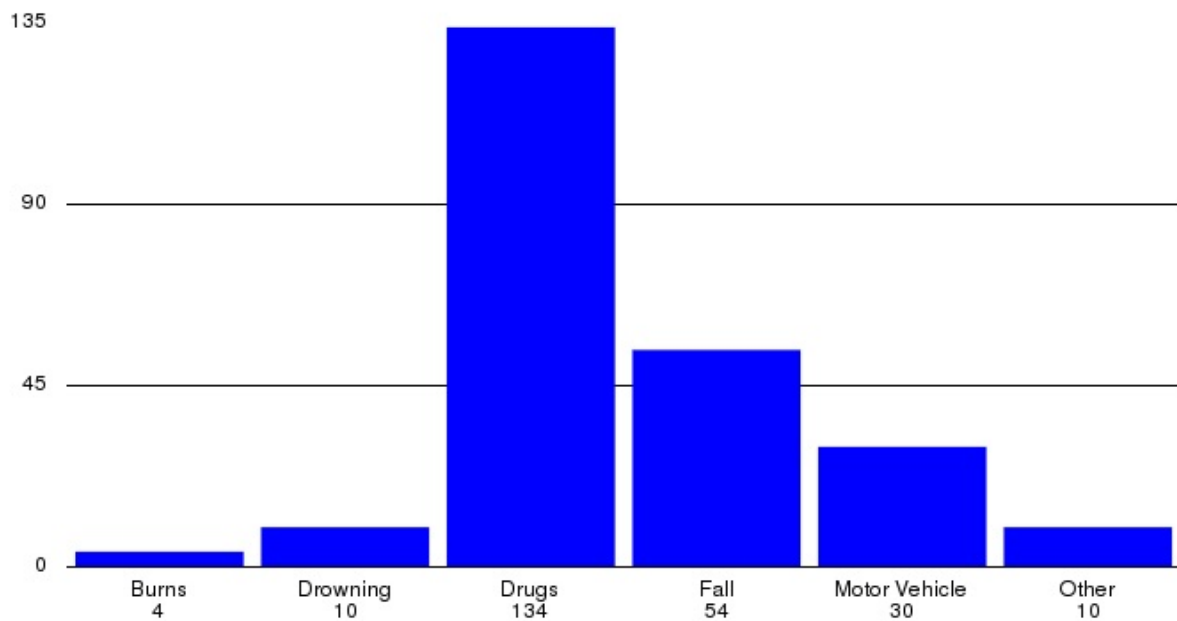
Deaths by Unnatural Causes



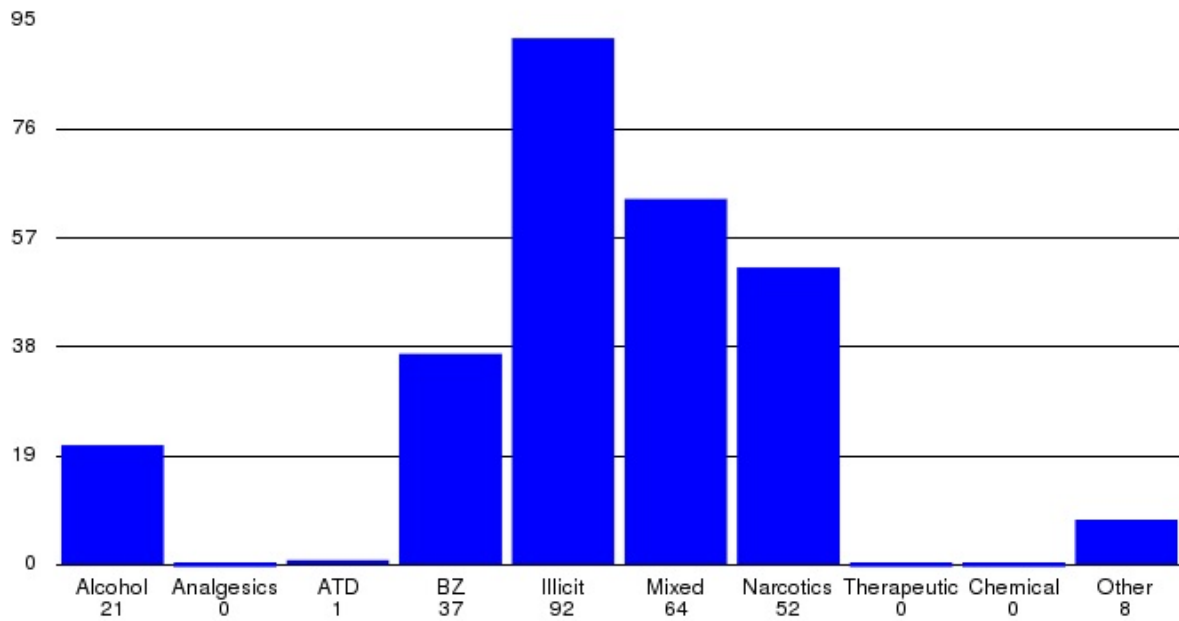
Accidental Deaths - Motor Vehicle Crashes



Accidental Deaths by Type

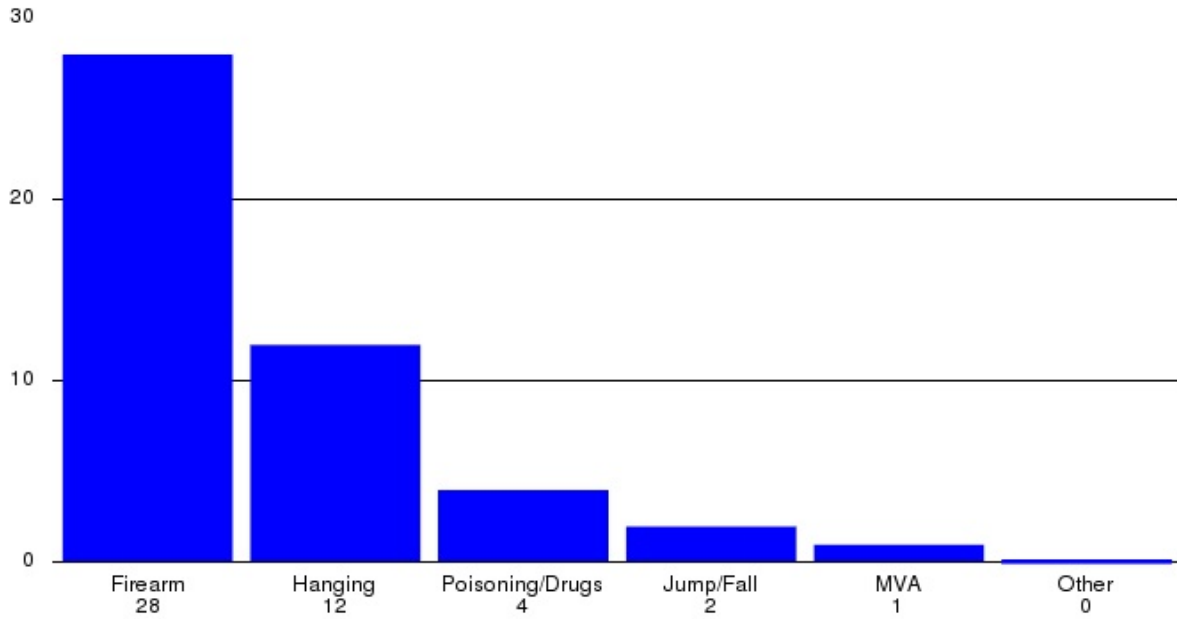


Drugs Contributing to Cause of Death

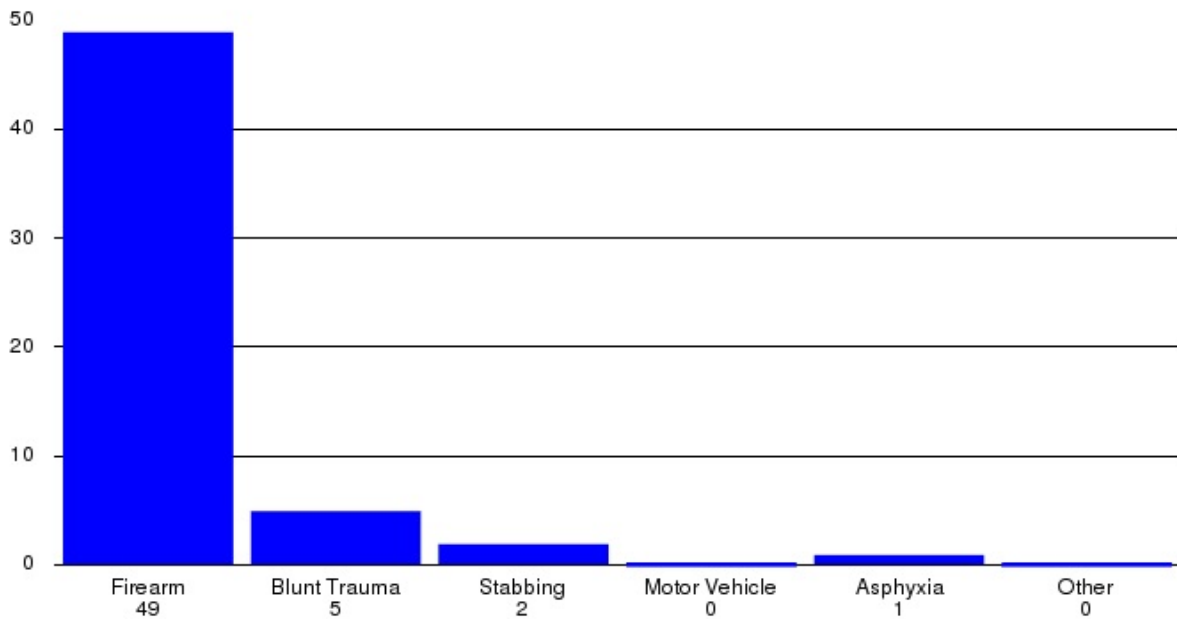


68 of the drug related deaths involved heroin

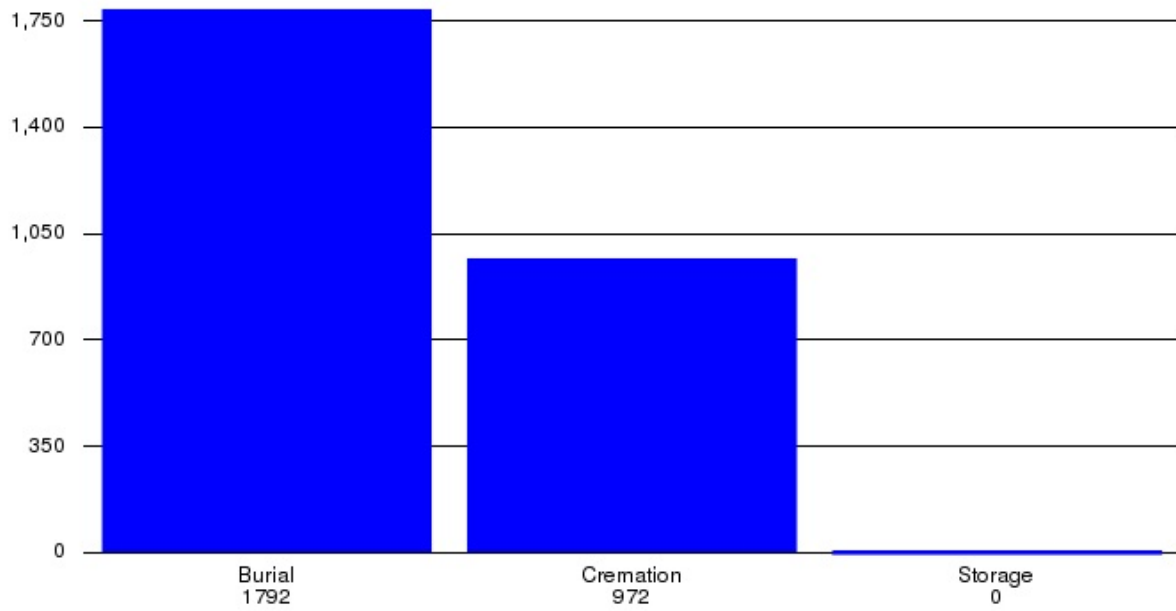
Suicide by Means



Homicide Deaths

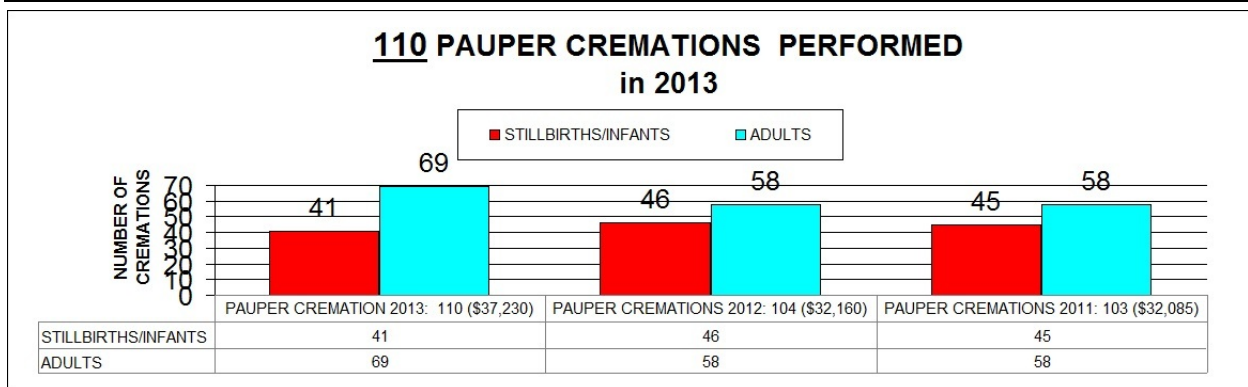


Disposition of the Body After Investigation



Cremation Permits issued on non-coroner cases: **484**

Pauper/Unclaimed Remains Cremations



The Jefferson Parish Coroner's Office (JPCO) is required by law to bury or cremate all pauper, abandoned and unclaimed persons who died in Jefferson Parish. In accordance with the law, a procedure has been established by the JPCO to facilitate the necessary arrangements regarding the unclaimed remains. The JPCO maintains an agreement with a local funeral home to handle the final disposition of the remains.

Following notification of an unclaimed body in Jefferson Parish, it becomes the responsibility of the JPCO death investigator to initiate a diligent search for a family member or concerned party willing to claim the body. If after 30 days of death and the body is still unclaimed, the JPCO may dispose of the body in accordance with the law.

There has been an exponential increase in the number of unclaimed bodies in Jefferson Parish. In 2013, **69** adults and **41** infant bodies were cremated as unclaimed, compared to **48** in 2001. On average, the death investigator will spend 3-5 days conducting a search for the next of kin, other family or any concerned party to claim the body.

Body Transportation Costs

2013: 558 body transfers costing \$108,860 **2012:** 507 body transfers costing \$101,000 **2011:** 478 body transfers costing \$94,960.

Louisiana Organ Procurement Agency Statistics

6 organs transplanted saving **21** lives.

37 tissue donations enhancing **2590** lives.

Community Outreach Division Statistics

Mental Health Department

	Jefferson Parish	Out of Parish	Total All Parishes
Order for Protective Custody (OPC)	421	5	426
Request for Coroner's Examination (PEC)	3,524	2,773	6,297
Coroner's Emergency Certificate (CEC)	1,819	1,556	3,375

Sexual Assault Department

	1st Quarter	2nd Quarter	3rd Quarter	4th Quarter	Annual Total
Children - Male	11	21	28	6	66
Children - Female	25	56	49	51	181
Adults - Female (Ages 17+)	8	8	8	10	34

Community Outreach Department

Teen Life Counts – Suicide Prevention / Jefferson Parish Public Schools

Students	Classes	Referrals
1,294	54	218