

Big Horn County Coroner



2025 Annual Report

Big Horn County Coroners Office
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Coroner's Office Staff



Mike Jameson
Coroner

Laureena Houchin
Deputy Coroner

Bill Brenner
Chief Deputy Coroner

Michael Jameson Jr.
Deputy Coroner

Heidi r
Forensic Pathologist

Ken Blackburn (As needed)
Deputy Coroner

The Role of the Coroner's Office

The Big Horn County Coroner's Office investigates sudden, violent, unexpected, and suspicious deaths that occur in Big Horn County. The Office of the Coroner certifies death after investigation and postmortem examination and issues the death certificate as required by law. Complete findings of the death investigation are distributed to families and law enforcement agencies as appropriate.

The main duties of the Office of the Coroner are to determine the cause and manner of death, and certify deaths that are reported to the Coroner. The cause of death is the disease process or injury that resulted in death. There are thousands of diseases and injuries that may result 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. On occasion, the manner of death is classified as indeterminate.

Information collected during the investigation helps clarify the circumstances, such as the sequence of events prior to death. Evidence collected during an investigation and/or postmortem examination may help lead to the arrest or successful conviction of a suspect in a homicide case. Because deaths occur around the clock, Coroner staff members are available 24 hours a day, 365 days per year.

With the skill and experience of the Coroner investigators and board-certified forensic pathologists, we believe the quality of death investigations in Big Horn County are among the best in the State, and we are actually called to assist adjacent counties. The death scene investigation reports filed by the investigators are very thorough and supply comprehensive information to the Coroners.

Our Coroners and investigators also extend their duties to the living by answering questions and addressing concerns regarding deaths within the county. Coroner investigators frequently make personal contact with family members of a deceased and assist them by providing appropriate answers regarding the circumstances of the death. Coroner investigators are supplied with a pamphlet for distribution to families. The information provides answers to common questions and facts about autopsies and also provides resource information pertaining to grief counseling.

In 2008 Coroner's and Medical Examiner Office's contributed significant input toward the implementation of a web based death investigation report system. After providing assistance to Occupational Research and Assessment, Inc. of Big Rapids, Michigan, the Medicolegal Death Investigation Log or, MDI Log was launched in June of 2008. MDI Log is a comprehensive investigative report/database system that enables the Big Horn County Coroner's Office to review death scene investigation information from a secure Internet site any time of the day. MDI Log enables Coroner Investigators to submit death scene investigation reports via the Internet in an efficient manner, and even on scene. MDI Log has evolved to become a valuable tool for our office.

We extend our sincere gratitude to the Big Horn County Board of Commissioners for their support of the Coroner program and the services we provide to the citizens of the Big Horn County.

Types of Deaths Reportable to the Coroner's Office

Wyoming Statute 7-4-104 Defines what cases are coroner cases in the State of Wyoming:

Deaths Reportable to the Coroner:

- 7-4-104. Definitions.
 - (a) As used in this chapter:
 - (i) "Coroner's case" means a case involving a death which was not anticipated and which may involve any of the following conditions:
 - (A) Violent or criminal action;
 - (B) Apparent suicide;
 - (C) Accident;
 - (D) Apparent drug or chemical overdose or toxicity;
 - (E) The deceased was unattended by a physician or other licensed health care provider;
 - (F) Apparent child abuse causes;
 - (G) The deceased was a prisoner, trustee, inmate or patient of any county or state corrections facility or state hospital, whether or not the death is unanticipated;
 - (H) If the cause is unknown, or cannot be certified by a physician,
 - (J) A public health hazard is presented; or
 - (K) The identity of the victim is unknown or the body is unclaimed.

Big Horn County Coroner's Office Cases

Population	12,022
Cases Reported to the Coroner's Office	13
A. Number of deaths certified after examination	13
1. Number of Coroner Cases with Complete Autopsy	5
2. Number of Coroner Cases with External Examination	8
3. Number of Coroner Cases with Limited Examination	0
B. Number of deaths certified without postmortem examination	8
C. Number of deaths not certified by Medical Examiner's Office after investigation	0

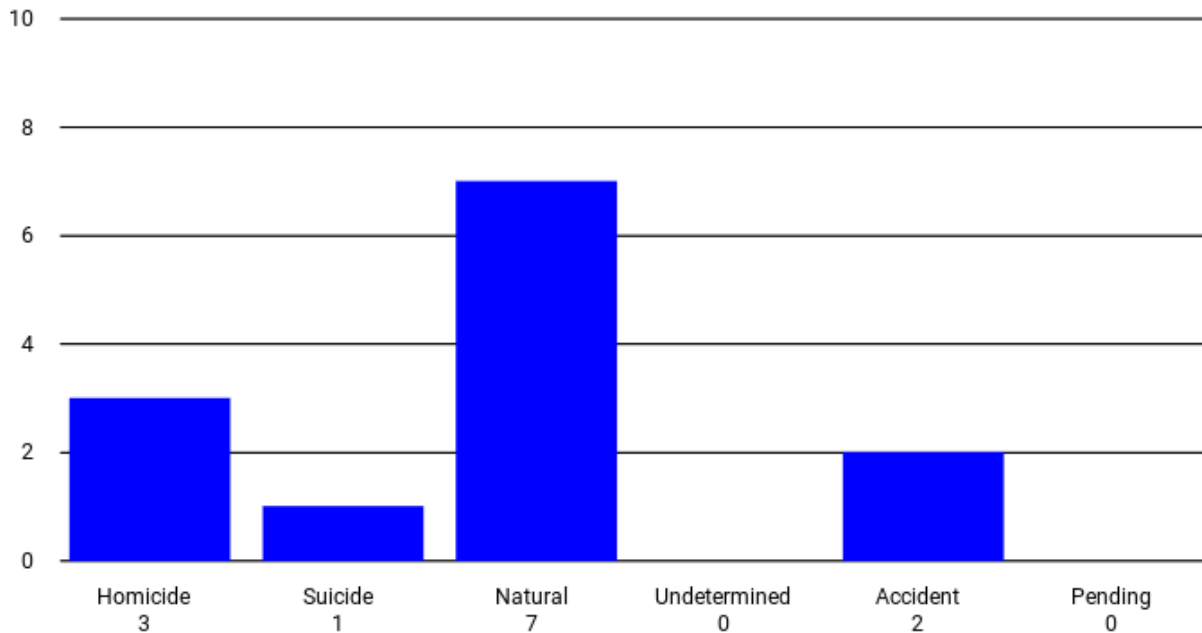
Definitions

Full Autopsy: A complete external and internal examination of a decedent

Limited Examination: An examination which is focused on a specific organ or region of the body, i.e., heart. The limited examination also includes an external examination.

External Examination: An examination of the exterior of a decedent.

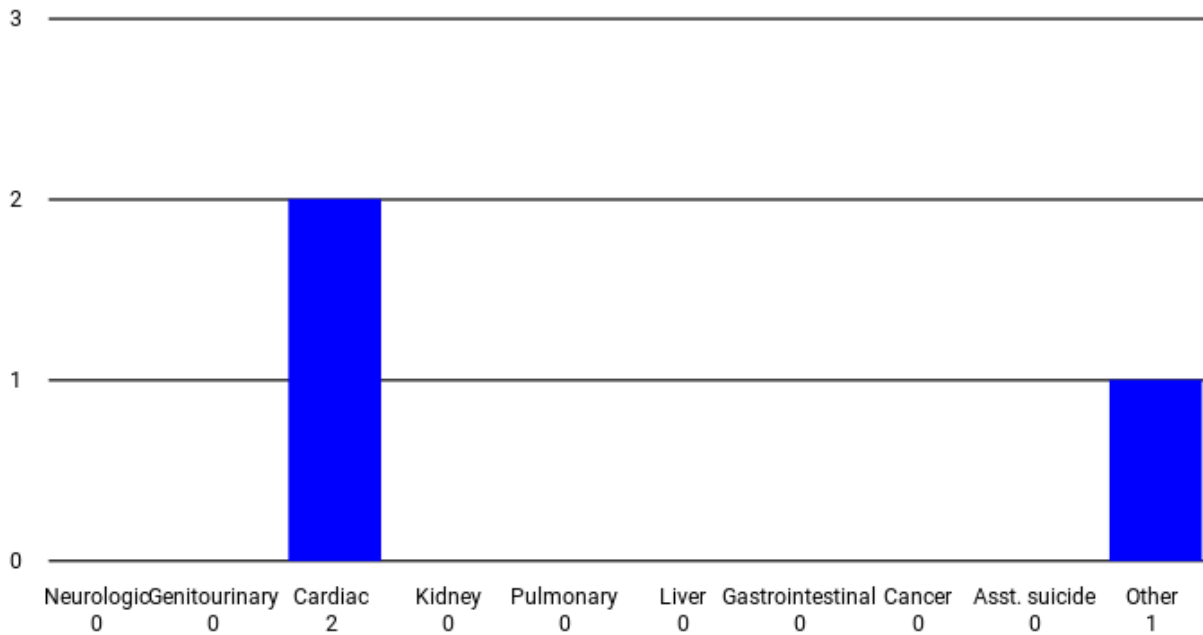
Manner of Death by Postmortem Examination



There are two types of autopsies. One is a full, which includes making a "Y incision", and removing organs. Obtaining weights, and histology samples for testing. This can only be performed by a Board Certified Licensed Forensic Pathologist by Wyoming law, and we assist as an autopsy technician assisting with cutting and removing parts for the pathologist.

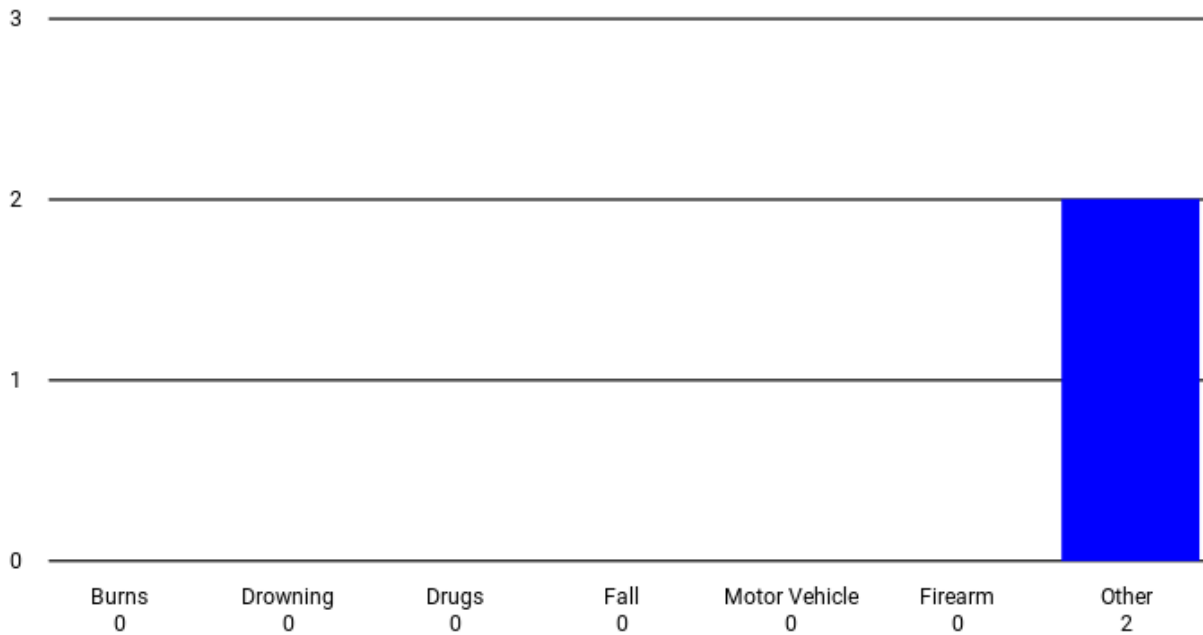
The other is an external examination in which we perform, and consists of palpations to check for internal injuries, and aspiration of the pleural cavity to check for internal bleeding, and documentations of all anomalies that we discover on the decedent. We then consult with either the decedent's primary physician, or our Forensic Pathologist to determine a cause and manner of death. We also extract blood, vitreous, and urine from the decedent's body to send in for toxicology tests. Sometimes we will have to do gunshot residue kits, fingernail scrapings, DNA, and other collection of evidence depending on the case.

Deaths by Natural Causes



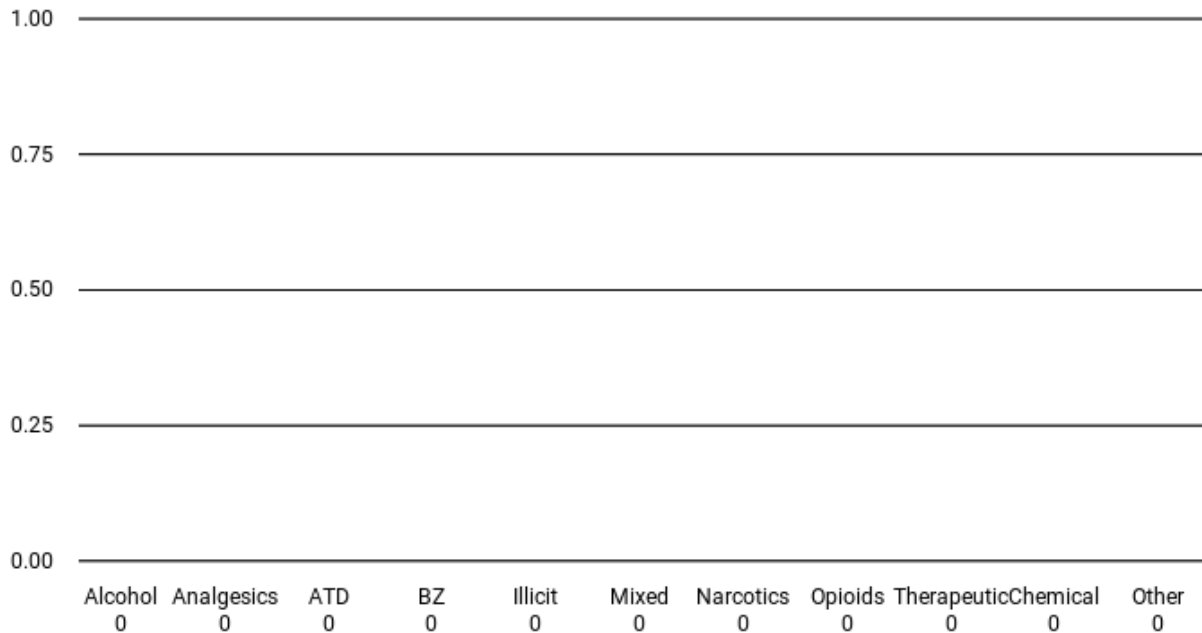
Natural deaths are our most common, but we can never take this lightly. We treat every death as a homicide until ruled otherwise. We feel that we owe that to the citizens of this county. We speak for the dead when no one else can. We usually determine a cause and manner of death utilizing past medical records, and given lifestyle. Consultations with physicians and our pathologist assists us greatly.

Accidental Deaths by Type



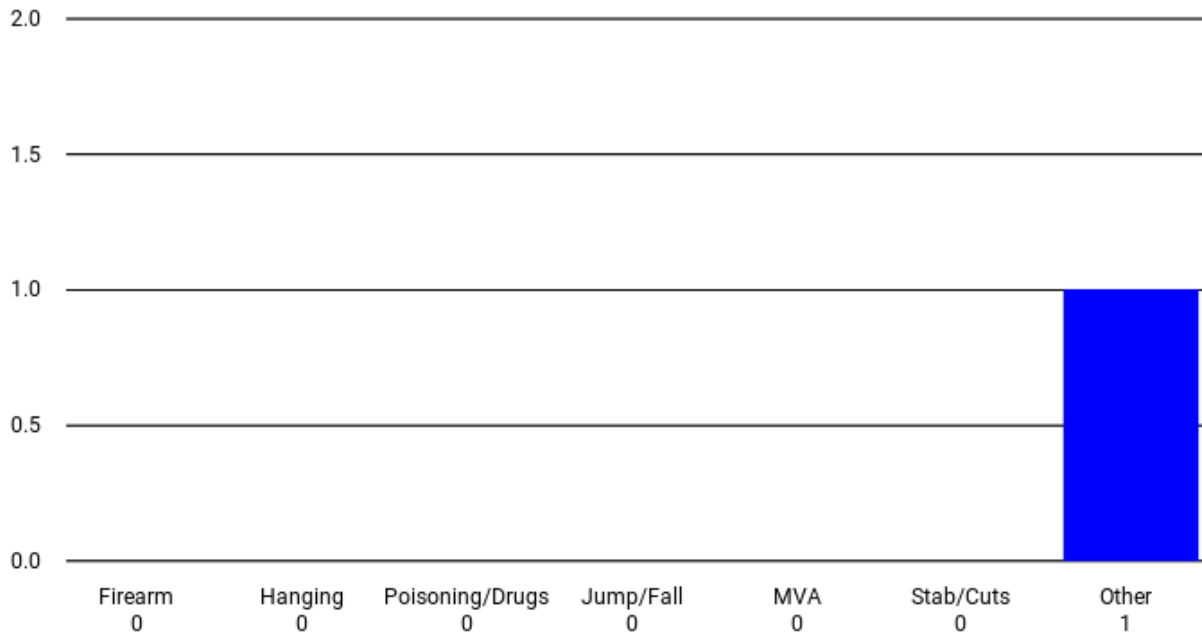
Accidents have to be treated differently depending on the location, and circumstances. Some accidents can be caught up in litigation especially work-related accidents. For this reason, we have to do our due diligence because we will be called to testify in court in most cases, and will have to demonstrate why we came upon the conclusion through our expertise that we did, in cause and manner of death.

Drugs Contributing to Cause of Death



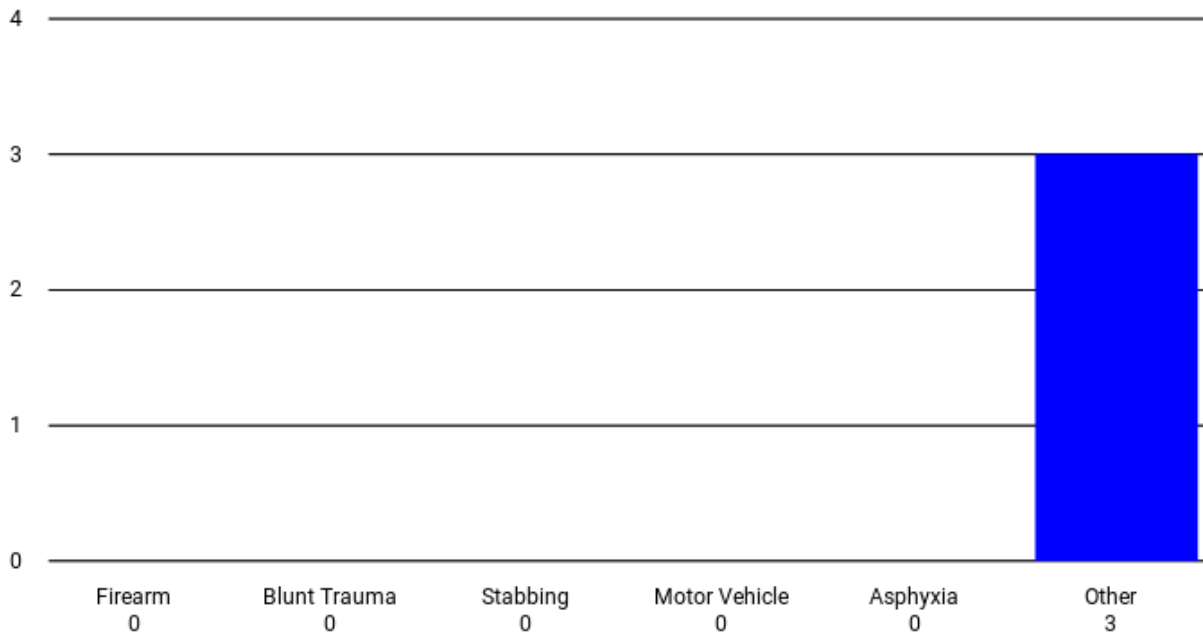
So far this year we have had no drug induced cause of deaths, and that is a good thing, but I would imagine if history repeats itself than we will have a few of these in our future. Toxicology plays a huge role in determining drug induced deaths. Also organ examination to see the metabolic process, but lifestyles are good indicators as well. Again we have to do our due diligence on these types of cases, because sometimes they lead to criminal charges.

Suicide by Means



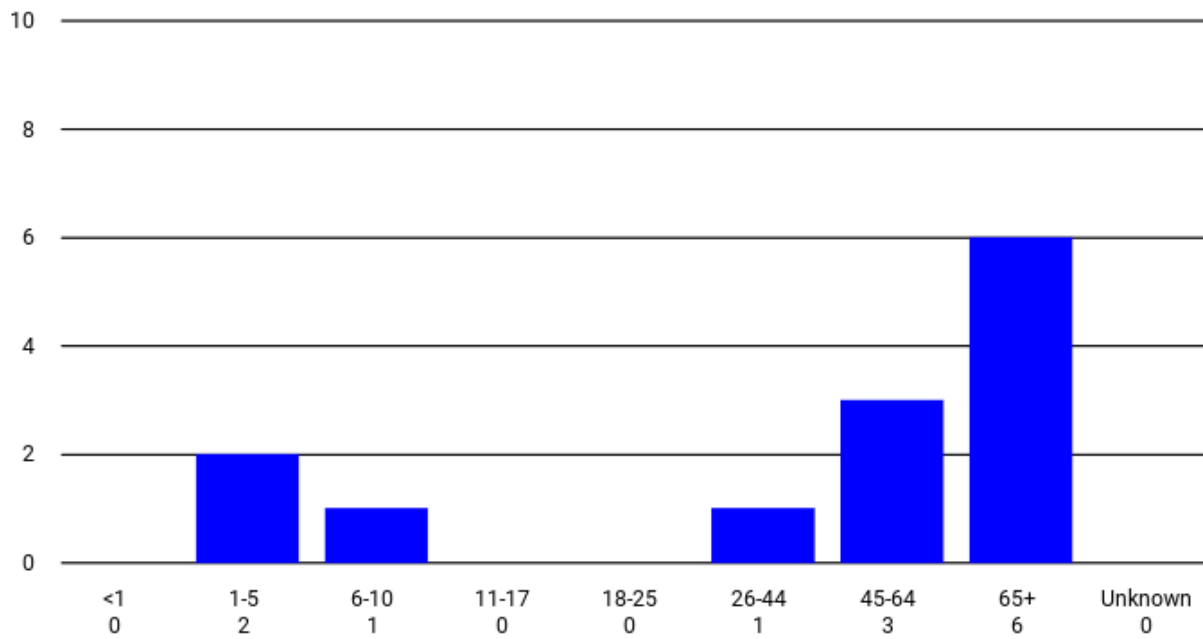
Suicides are always difficult for the family of the decedent, and we have to handle those situations with compassion, but on the same token, we also have to make sure that it is what it appears to be. Some people do not want to admit that their loved ones actually took their own life, so we have to sometimes go over and above to make sure that they understand that no one harmed their loved one.

Homicide Deaths



The Coroner's Office had the unfortunate job of investigating a quadruple homicide this year involving children. Cases like this take the office a long long time to complete. We have to not only do postmortem examinations, but wait for toxicology reports, and histology reports not to mention the amount of paperwork involved. This is not something that occurs regularly, but when it does, it helps to have a professional response, and an office that can work with state agencies in the collection of valuable evidence including gunshot residue, DNA, Fingerprints, nail clippings, etc...

Deaths by Age Group



Conclusion and Overview

This document outlines the crucial role of the Big Horn County Coroner's Office in our community and explains the complexities and time requirements of death investigations.

Necessity of a Coroner's Office

The Coroner's Office plays a vital role in public health, safety, and legal processes. Its primary responsibilities include:

1. **Determining Cause and Manner of Death:** Investigating deaths that are sudden, unexpected, or violent, and certifying the cause and manner of death on official death certificates. This is essential for vital statistics, insurance claims, and legal proceedings.
2. **Public Health Protection:** Identifying and reporting public health hazards, such as infectious diseases or workplace safety issues.
3. **Legal Accountability:** Providing evidence in criminal cases, including homicides, suicides, and accidents.
4. **Next-of-Kin Notification:** Locating and notifying the legal next-of-kin (NOK) of the deceased, ensuring families receive timely and respectful information.
5. **Data Collection and Reporting:** Contributing to local, state, and federal death review programs, providing data on trends and issues such as violent deaths, child fatalities, and elder abuse.

Time Involved in Death Investigations

Death investigations are complex and time-consuming. The duration of an investigation varies depending on the circumstances, but generally includes the following stages:

1. **Scene Response:** Responding to the death scene, conducting a preliminary investigation, documenting findings, and coordinating with law enforcement and other agencies.
2. **Examination:** Once the decedent is transported to our office, we perform medical procedures such as palpations for injuries, extraction of bodily fluids for both cause of death and toxicology, sometimes fingerprints, DNA extraction, extraction of projectiles, consultation with a Board Certified Forensic Pathologist, not including other forensic specialist. **Identification and Notification:** Identifying the deceased and locating and notifying the legal NOK, which can sometimes involve extensive searches.
3. **Medical Records Review:** Obtaining and reviewing medical records to understand the decedent's health history.
4. **Autopsy and Examination:** Ordering and conducting autopsies when necessary, and performing external examinations, toxicology tests, and other analyses.
5. **Report Writing:** Documenting all findings in detailed investigative reports, which can be lengthy and require careful analysis of evidence.
6. **Death Certification:** Completing and filing the death certificate, which requires accurate determination of cause and manner of death.

Each of these steps can take considerable time. For example:

- Scene investigations can last several hours, especially in complex cases.
- Autopsies and associated laboratory tests may take days or weeks to complete.
- Reviewing extensive medical records can be time-consuming.
- Writing comprehensive reports requires meticulous attention to detail.

In Big Horn County the usual amount of reported coroner cases is roughly 30 to 45 per year, and we perform anywhere from 8 to 12 autopsies for our county not including autopsies for adjacent counties.

We tested toxicology on all 13 decedents

We transported all 13 decedents to the coroners office for examination.

All decedents were identified.

One decedent received organ procurement

All decedents were claimed by next-of-kin

No exhumations were performed

No in-custody deaths were reported this year

13 Death notifications were performed this year

The Coroner's Office is essential for ensuring justice, protecting public health, and providing closure to grieving families. The complexity of death investigations necessitates thorough and time-consuming procedures. Adequate resources and support for the Coroner's Office are critical to fulfilling these vital responsibilities effectively,

CONCLUSION

We respectfully address the current budget considerations for the Coroner's Office and highlight our efforts to operate frugally despite the inherent challenges of our work. We understand the reality of budget shortfalls and have taken several measures to minimize costs, which are detailed below:

- **Training:** We have prioritized free training opportunities, eliminating travel and tuition expenses this year.
- **Supplies:** We have diligently sought out more cost-effective supplies, recognizing the significant need for sterilization, cleaning, and biohazard-related materials in our facility.
- **Staffing:** We have requested no staff raises since Coroner Jameson's election. The only wage adjustment requested is for a part-time deputy who completed field training, and this was minimal.
- **Equipment:** We consistently pursue equipment through other agencies or grant opportunities, though we acknowledge the current difficulty in securing these resources.
- **Workforce Efficiency:** We operate with a limited staff, including one full-time employee who serves as an autopsy technician. This position allows our pathologist to conduct postmortem examinations here for our county and neighboring ones, while also reducing the need for extensive part-time deputy hours. This full-time position is essential to our 24/7, 365-day on-call coverage, which is demanding for our small team.
- **On-Call Compensation:** We have analyzed our on-call time and associated wages for May 2025 to illustrate the current levels of compensation, which do not include time spent responding to calls, performing and assisting with autopsies, cleaning the facility or conducting investigations:

We believe these points demonstrate our commitment to fiscal responsibility while maintaining the necessary level of service for the community.

Respectfully Submitted,

Big Horn County Demographics

Basin is a town in the county seat of Big Horn County, Wyoming, United States. The population was 1,288 at

the 2020 census. The community is located near the center of the Bighorn Basin with the Big Horn River east of the town. Basin's post office, built in 1919, is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

The farming community, perhaps best known as the "lilac town", of Basin WY is located approximately 60 miles southeast of Cody, Wyoming.

- **The streets and approaching highways to Basin are lined with perfumed lilac hedges and glorious shade trees.**
- **Outdoor recreational opportunities in the area include scenic drives, hiking, biking, wildlife watching, fishing, skiing and golf.**
- **Located in one of the most scenic countries in Wyoming, Basin offers many attractions.**

Overview

Basin lies in perhaps one of the most scenic counties in northern Wyoming. Even as you approach the town, you will realize that it is special. In 1910, the citizens of Basin began a tree and shrub planting campaign and a "lilac town" drive in 1936. Today, the streets and approaching highways are among the finest in Wyoming, lined with perfumed hedges and glorious shade trees.

Known as a "farmer's town" due to the agricultural endeavors in the area. The principle industries in Big Horn County are bentonite mining, farming, sugar beet & bean processing, and tourism. Basin is also the county seat of Big Horn County.

Location

Basin Wyoming is located near the center of the Bighorn Basin with the Big Horn River east of the town. Basin is approximately 60 miles southeast of Cody along US-16/US-20.

Services/Amenities

This simple town has comfortable dwellings, wide streets, and a four block civic center with courthouse, post office, library, and park.

There are several small motels/hotels directly in Basin with several guest ranches in the outlying area. The town also has a few dining options to pick from.

Activities

Outdoor recreational activities in the area include scenic drives, hiking, biking, wildlife watching, fishing, skiing and golf.

Attractions

Located in one of the most scenic countries in Wyoming, Basin offers many attractions in the nearby area including the Big Horn National Forest & Antelope Butte Ski Area, Pryor Mountain Wild Horse Refuge, Greybull Museum and Dinosaur Tracksite, Bighorn Reservoir Recreation Area, Shell Falls, Paintrock and Medicine Wheel.

Getting Here

Basin WY lies approximately 60 miles southeast of Cody, WY. To get to Cody from Basin head north on US-16/US-20/WY-789. After reaching the community of Greybull, continue to follow US-16/US-20 west.

Along the way, you will be impressed with the scenery, with the rugged mountains and wide open valleys. If you haven't been to Greybull before, take the time to stop and look around this other charming Wyoming

community

Big Horn County is a [county](#) in the [U.S. state](#) of [Wyoming](#). As of the [2020 United States census](#), the population was 11,521.^[1] The county seat is [Basin](#).^[2] Its north boundary abuts the south boundary of [Montana](#). Big Horn County was created by the legislature of [Wyoming Territory](#) in March 1890, and was organized in 1897. According to the [US Census Bureau](#), the county has a total area of 3,159 square miles (8,180 km²), of which 3,137 square miles (8,120 km²) is land and 22 square miles (57 km²) (0.7%) is water. As of the [2000 United States Census](#),^[10] there were 11,461 people, 4,312 households, and 3,087 families in the county. The [population density](#) was 4 people per square mile (1.5 people/km²).

Wyoming State Statues Pertaining to Coroners

TITLE 7

CHAPTER 4

COUNTY CORONERS

As of July 2017 -----ARTICLE 1

IN GENERAL

7-4-101. Election; Oath; Bond.

A coroner shall be elected in each county for a term of four (4) years. He shall take the oath prescribed by the constitution of the state and give bond to the state of Wyoming, in the penal sum of one thousand dollars (\$1,000.00), with sufficient sureties, to be approved by the board of county commissioners, conditioned that he will faithfully perform all duties required by law.

7-4-102. Deputy Coroners.

The county coroner may appoint deputy coroners, who shall serve in the absence or inability of the coroner and who shall receive compensation as the board of county commissioners determines by resolution.

7-4-103. Certification Requirements; Penalty; Expenses.

(a) After January 5, 1987, no person shall continue in office as county coroner or deputy coroner unless he has been certified under W.S. 9-1-634 as having completed:

(i) Not later than one (1) year after assuming office, a basic coroner course;

(ii) Continuing education requirements promulgated by the board of coroner standards pursuant to W.S. 7-4-211(c)(iii).

(b) Any person who knowingly fails to comply with subsection (a) of this section and continues in office is guilty of a misdemeanor punishable by a fine of twenty-five dollars (\$25.00) for each day of noncompliance.

(c) Each coroner or deputy coroner attending approved classes to receive the certification required by subsection (a) of this section shall receive his present salary or per diem in the same manner and amount as state employees, whichever is greater, and shall be reimbursed for his actual travel and other necessary expenses reasonably incurred in obtaining the required training. The expenses shall be paid by the county in which the coroner or deputy coroner is serving.

(d) After July 1, 2001, no person shall serve as deputy coroner or as an employee of a county coroner who does not meet the employment standards adopted by the board of coroner standards pursuant to W.S. 7-4-211(c)(v).

7-4-104. Definitions.

(a) As used in this chapter:

(i) "Coroner's case" means a case involving a death which was not anticipated and which may involve any of the following conditions:

(A) Violent or criminal action;

(B) Apparent suicide;

(C) Accident;

(D) Apparent drug or chemical overdose or toxicity;

(E) The deceased was unattended by a physician or other licensed health care provider;

(F) Apparent child abuse causes;

(G) The deceased was a prisoner, trustee, inmate or patient of any county or state corrections facility or state hospital, whether or not the death is unanticipated;

(H) If the cause is unknown, or cannot be certified by a physician;

(J) A public health hazard is presented; or

(K) The identity of the victim is unknown or the body is unclaimed.

(ii) "Coroner's office" means all personnel appointed and elected to the office of coroner, including the county coroner, deputies and assistants;

(iii) "County coroner" means the elected or appointed officer of the county whose task is to investigate the cause of death in a coroner's case.

(iv) "Anticipated death" means the death of an individual who has been diagnosed by a physician acting within the scope of his license as being afflicted with an illness or disease reasonably likely to result in death, and there is no cause to believe the death occurred for any reasons other than those associated with the illness or disease;

(v) "Unattended" means the deceased had not been under the care of a physician or other health care provider acting within the scope of his license within sixty (60) days immediately prior to the date of death.

7-4-105. Confidentiality of Reports, Photos and Recordings; Exceptions; Penalties.

(a) After viewing the body and completing his investigation, the coroner shall draw up and sign his verdict on the death under consideration. The coroner shall also make a written docket giving an accurate description of the deceased person, his name if it can be determined, cause and manner of death, including relevant toxicological factors, age of decedent, date and time of death and the description of money and other property found with the body. The verdict and written docket are public records and may be viewed or obtained by request to the coroner, pursuant to W.S. 16-4-202.

(b) Except as provided in subsections (c), (d), (e), (g) and (o) of this section a toxicology report, a photograph, video recording or audio recording made at the scene of the death or made in the course of a postmortem examination or autopsy made or caused by a coroner shall be confidential and are not public records.

(c) A surviving spouse, surviving parent, an adult child, personal representative, legal representative, or a legal guardian may:

(i) View and copy a toxicology report, a photograph or video recording made at the scene of the death or made in the course of a postmortem examination or autopsy made by or caused by a coroner; and

(ii) Listen to and copy an audio recording made at the scene of the death or made in the course of a postmortem examination or autopsy made by or caused by a coroner.

(d) Upon making a written request, a law enforcement entity of the state of Wyoming or United States government, a district attorney, the United States attorney for the district of Wyoming, a county, state or federal public health agency, a board licensing health care professionals under title 33 of the Wyoming statutes, the division responsible for administering the Wyoming Workers' Compensation Act, the state occupational epidemiologist, the department and the division responsible for administering the Wyoming Occupational Health and Safety Act, the office of the inspector of mines, insurance companies with legitimate interest in the death, all parties in civil litigation proceedings with legitimate interest in the death or a treating physician, while in performance of his official duty may:

(i) View and copy a toxicology report, photograph or video recording made at the scene of the death or made in the course of a postmortem examination or autopsy made by or caused by a coroner; and

(ii) Listen to and copy an audio recording made at the scene of the death or made in the course of a postmortem examination or autopsy made by or caused by a coroner.

(e) Unless otherwise required in the performance of official duties, the identity of the deceased shall remain confidential in any record obtained under subsection (d) of this section.

(f) The coroner having custody of a toxicology report, a photograph, a video recording or an audio recording made at any scene of the death or made in the course of a postmortem examination or autopsy may allow the use for case consultation with an appropriate expert. The coroner may also allow the use of a toxicology report, a photograph, a video recording or an audio recording made at the scene of the death or made in the course of a postmortem examination or autopsy by legitimate scientific research organizations or for training purposes provided the identity of the decedent is not published or otherwise made public.

(g) A court upon showing of good cause, may issue an order authorizing a person to:

(i) View or copy a toxicology report, photograph or video recording made at the scene of the death or made in the course of a postmortem examination or autopsy made or caused by a coroner; and

(ii) Listen to and copy an audio recording made at the scene of the death or made in the course of a postmortem examination or autopsy made or caused by a coroner.

(h) In determining good cause under subsection (g) of this section, the court shall consider:

(i) Whether the disclosure is necessary for the public evaluation of governmental performance;

(ii) The seriousness of the intrusion into the family's privacy;

(iii) Whether the disclosure of the toxicology report, photograph, video recording or audio recording is by the least intrusive means available; and

(iv) The availability of similar information in other public records regardless of form.

(j) A surviving spouse shall be given reasonable notice and a copy of any petition filed with the court under subsection (g) of this section and reasonable opportunity to be present and be heard on the matter. If there is no surviving spouse, the notice of the petition being filed and the opportunity to be heard shall be given to the deceased's parents and if the deceased has no living parent, the notice of the petition being filed and the opportunity to be heard shall be given to the adult children of the deceased or legal guardian, personal representative or legal representative of the children of the deceased.

(k) A coroner or coroner's designee that knowingly violates this section shall be guilty of a misdemeanor punishable by imprisonment for not more than six (6) months, a fine of not more than one thousand dollars (\$1,000.00), or both.

(m) A person who knowingly or purposefully uses the information in a manner other than the specified purpose for which it was released or violates a court order issued under subsection (g) of this section is guilty of a misdemeanor punishable by imprisonment for not more than six (6) months, a fine of not more than one thousand dollars (\$1,000.00), or both.

(n) In all cases, the viewing, copying, listening to, or other handling of a toxicology report, photograph, video recording, or audio recording made at a scene of the death or made in the course of a postmortem examination or autopsy made or caused by a coroner shall be under the direct supervision of the coroner, or the coroner's designee, who is the custodian of the record.

(o) In the event that the coroner, or the coroner's designee, determines that a person's death was caused by an infectious disease, biological toxin or any other cause which may constitute a public health emergency as defined in Wyoming Statute (W.S.) § 35-4-115(a)(i), the coroner shall release to the state health officer or his designee all information and records required under W.S. § 35-4-107. If the state health official or his designee determines upon an examination of the results of the autopsy and the toxicology report that a public health emergency may in fact exist, he shall release the appropriate information to the general public as provided by department of health rules and regulations.

INQUEST

7-4-201 Reports of death; investigation; summoning of jurors; fees and costs; inspection of medical records.

(a) When any person is found dead and the death appears to have occurred under circumstances indicating the death is a coroner's case, the person who discovers the death shall report it immediately to law enforcement authorities who shall in turn notify the coroner. A person who knowingly violates this section is guilty of a misdemeanor punishable by imprisonment for not more than six (6) months, a fine of not more than seven hundred fifty dollars (\$750.00), or both.

(b) When the coroner is notified that the dead body of any person has been found within the limits of the county or that the death resulted from injury sustained within the county and he suspects that the death is a coroner's case, he shall conduct an investigation which may include:

(i) An examination of the body and an investigation into the medical history of the case;

(ii) The appointment of a qualified physician to assist in determining the cause of death;

(iii) An autopsy if the physician appointed to assist the coroner under this subsection determines an autopsy is necessary;

(iv) An inquest; or

(v) Any other reasonable procedure which may be necessary to determine the cause of death.

(c) If the coroner determines to hold an inquest he shall summon three (3) citizens of the county to appear before him to act as jurors at the time and place named. The jurors shall receive the same fee paid jurors in district court as provided in W.S. § 1-11-303 and per diem and travel expenses in the same manner as state employees. The coroner may furnish transportation for the jury and witnesses to and from the place of inquest and for the removal of the dead body.

(d) If a coroner determines the injuries which caused the person's death were received in a county other than that in which the body was found, he shall transfer authority for the investigation and inquest to the coroner for that county.

(e) The expense and costs of conducting the investigation or holding the inquest shall be paid by the county in which the injuries were received. The accounts of the claimants shall be attested by the coroner or acting coroner, and shall be presented in duplicate to the board of county commissioners of the proper county. If the board of county commissioners finds that the inquest was necessary and in accordance with law, and the accounts are correct and just, the accounts shall be paid in warrants properly drawn upon the order of the county commissioners.

(f) Notwithstanding any other provision of law to the contrary, the coroner may inspect medical and psychological data relating to the person whose death is being investigated if the coroner determines the information is relevant and necessary to the investigation.

7-4-202. Impaneling of bystanders as jurors; oath.

If any juror fails to appear, the coroner shall immediately summon the proper number from the bystanders and proceed to impanel them. He shall administer the following oath: "You do solemnly swear (or affirm) that you will diligently inquire and truly present if known or determinable, the time and date of death, and by what means and manner the death of (NAME OF DECEASED) was caused, according to your knowledge and the evidence given you, so help you God."

7-4-203. Issuance of subpoenas; witness fees; enforcement of attendance.

The coroner may issue subpoenas and compel the attendance of witnesses to testify at the inquest. Witnesses shall be allowed the same fees as in cases before a circuit court, and the coroner shall have the same authority to enforce the attendance of witnesses and to punish for contempt as provided by W.S. § 1-21-901 through § 1-21-909.

7-4-204. Oath of witness; recording of testimony; compensation of reporter.

An oath shall be administered to each witness as follows: "You do solemnly swear (or affirm) that the testimony which you shall give to this inquest concerning the death of the person about whom this inquest is being held, shall be the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth, so help you God." The coroner shall insure that all testimony in an inquest shall be recorded. The compensation of the court reporter or of the person transcribing the audio tape shall be as prescribed by the board of county commissioners. Unless specifically requested by the coroner or prosecuting attorney, audio tapes need not be transcribed.

7-4-205. Return of inquisition by jury.

After hearing testimony and making necessary inquiries, the jurors shall return to the coroner their signed inquisition stating the name of the person and when, how and by what means, if known, he came to his death.

7-4-206. Coroner's return to court.

The coroner shall return to the district court the inquisition, the written evidence and a list of witnesses providing material testimony.

7-4-207. Disposition of body and effects of deceased.

(a) When the coroner investigates the death of a person whose body is not claimed by a friend or relative within five (5) days of the date of discovery and whose death does not require further investigation, he shall cause the body to be decently buried. The expense of the burial shall be paid from any property found with the body. If no property is found, the expense of the burial shall be paid by the county in which the investigation occurs.

(b) The coroner shall within a reasonable time after completing the investigation, turn over to the appointed personal representative of the estate of the deceased or, if none, to the clerk of the district court of the county, all money or other property found upon the body of the deceased. Personal items valued at less than fifty dollars (\$50.00) and items necessary for the convenience of the deceased's next of kin may be released to the deceased's next of kin.

7-4-208. Authority of sheriff to perform duties of coroner.

If there is no coroner, deputy coroner or in case of their absence, or inability to act, the county sheriff of the same county, the state health officer pursuant to W.S. § 35-1-241, or the coroner of another county if there is a joint powers agreement pursuant to W.S. § 16-1-102 through § 16-1-108 between the counties authorizing the coroner to so act, is authorized to perform the duties of coroner in relation to dead bodies.

7-4-209. Postmortem examination; liability limitation.

(a) When an inquisition is being held, if the coroner or the jury shall deem it requisite, he may summon one (1) or more physicians or surgeons, to make an autopsy or postmortem examination.

(b) If it is necessary to obtain or preserve evidence of the cause of death, the district attorney may order that a qualified physician perform an autopsy or postmortem examination of the body of any person who appears to have died by unlawful means, by violence, or when the cause of death is unknown.

(c) No person is subject to civil liability solely because he requested or was involved in the performing of an autopsy that was ordered by a coroner or district attorney.

7-4-210. Fees and mileage, salary.

(a) The coroner or deputy coroner of each county within this state shall receive fees and mileage, if any, as set by the board of county commissioners.

(b) The board of county commissioners shall set the salary of the coroner and deputy coroner. A coroner or deputy coroner shall not be prohibited from receiving other fees for their services unrelated to their official duties as coroner or deputy coroner.

7-4-211. Board of coroner standards.

(a) There is created a board of coroner standards. The board shall consist of one (1) chairman and six (6) members appointed by and who shall serve at the pleasure of the governor as follows:

(i) One (1) shall be a physician with a specialty in pathology who is licensed to practice in this state;

(ii) Three (3) shall be duly elected coroners in this state;

(iii) One (1) shall be a funeral director in this state;

(iv) One (1) shall be a duly elected district attorney in this state;

(v) One (1) shall be a peace officer certified under W.S. § 9-1-701 through § 9-1-707.

(b) The members of the board shall be appointed to terms of four (4) years which are concurrent with the terms of the office of coroner. Board members not otherwise compensated for attending board meetings shall receive travel expenses and per diem in the same manner and amount as state employees, and any other reasonable expenses upon board approval. Board members not otherwise compensated shall have their expenses paid from the general fund by appropriation to the office of the attorney general.

(c) The board shall:

(i) Meet at least biannually and at the call of the chairman or of a majority of the membership;

(ii) Promulgate standards dealing with the investigation of coroner's cases;

(iii) Promulgate educational and training requirements for coroner basic and continuing education requirements and review those requirements annually;

(iv) Cooperate with the peace officer standards and training commission in developing basic and continuing education courses for coroners;

(v) Promulgate employment standards for deputy coroners and coroner employees. The standards may include the requirement that deputy coroners and coroner employees provide to the employing coroner fingerprints and other information necessary for a state and national criminal history record background check and release of information as provided in W.S. § 7-19-106(k)(ii) and federal P.L. 92-544 and consent to the release of any criminal history information to the employing coroner.

(vi) Promulgate rules and regulations to provide for the review of complaints if a coroner or deputy coroner has failed to comply with any provision of W.S. § 7-4-103 or this subsection or has failed to meet any educational or training requirement provided under this section. The board shall make recommendations to the peace officer standards and training commission regarding revocation of certifications based on these investigations;

(vii) Provide for a system to offer educational programs to assist coroners and deputy coroners in meeting educational and training requirements provided under this section.

(d) The peace officer standards and training commission shall cooperate with the board of coroner standards in establishing course requirements and continuing education requirements required by law.

(e) The board shall contact the district attorney for the county or the attorney general to initiate an action and may serve as complaining party in an action under W.S. § 7-4-103(b) or § 18-3-902 to remove any coroner who is not in compliance with W.S. § 7-4-103.

(f) In addition to any action under subsection (e) of this section, the board shall notify the county commissioners for the county of any coroner or deputy coroner who has had his certification revoked.

- **9-1-634. Academy to provide coroner training; certification of completion.**

(a) The director of the Wyoming law enforcement academy shall provide at the academy or other location within the state a basic coroner's course of at least forty (40) hours. The course shall comply with the standards promulgated by the peace officers standards and training commission and the board of coroner standards.

(b) The executive director of the peace officers standards and training commission shall issue an appropriate certificate of completion to any coroner or deputy coroner who completes a coroner training course offered by the academy or which the board of coroner standards has certified as meeting board standards.

Section 2. Ten thousand dollars (\$10,000.00) is appropriated from the general fund to the office of the attorney general for payments to the board of coroners as authorized under W.S. § 7-4-211(b).

Also changed in the 2011 Legislature:

Section 2. W.S. § 16-4-203(d)(i) is amended to read:

16-4-203. Right of inspection; grounds for denial; access of news media; order permitting or restricting disclosure; exceptions.

(d) The custodian shall deny the right of inspection of the following records, unless otherwise provided by law:

(i) Medical, psychological and sociological data on individual persons, exclusive of coroners' verdicts and written dockets as provided in W.S. § 7-4-105(a); (previous wording stated "exclusive of coroner's autopsy reports")

Other above referenced statutes:

W.S. § 1-11-303. Amount of fees. (jurors) W.S. § 1-21-901 through § 1-21-909. Attendance of witnesses, contempt... W.S. § 7-19-106(k)(ii). Background checks, criminal history... W.S. § 9-1-701 through § 9-1-707. Peace officer standards and training commission. W.S. § 16-1-102 through § 16-1-108. Wyoming Joint Powers Act W.S. § 18-3-901 through § 18-3-902. Causes for removal from office enumerated, procedure... W.S. § 35-1-241. Safe disposal of corpses in emergency circumstances.