

Whitman County Coroner's Office

Kindness – Compassion – Assistance



2024 Annual Report

Date: June 17, 2025 Rev 3

ABOUT THE OFFICE

The Whitman County Coroner's Office was established in 1981 when Pete Martin was first appointed Coroner. Coroner Martin retired in February 2018, after an amazing 37-year career as the first Coroner for Whitman County. The Chief Deputy Coroner, Annie Pillers, was appointed Coroner effective March 2018, and subsequently elected Coroner November 2018.

The Whitman County Coroner's Office is responsible for death investigations in Whitman County. Whitman County is 2,159 square miles with an estimated population for 2024 of 48,750.

The Whitman County Coroner's Office is on-call 24 hours/7 days a week. Staff at the Coroner's Office come from a wide variety of backgrounds including emergency services, hospice, laboratory services, law enforcement, and medical professional, making a complementary and cohesive team serving those experiencing the sudden and unexpected death of a loved one competently and compassionately.

OFFICE LOCATION

411 N. Mill Street

Colfax, WA 99111

For report of a death: 9-1-1

Office 509-397-5641

Fax 509-505-6272

Email: coroneroffice@whitmancounty.gov

ROLE OF THE CORONER

The Coroner is responsible for investigating and determining the cause and manner of death for any sudden or unexpected, accidental, suspicious, or unattended deaths occurring within the geographic boundaries of Whitman County per Washington State Law, Revised Code of Washington chapter 36.24 County Coroner and chapter 68.50 RCW Human Remains.

Cause of death can be a disease process such as cancer, a stroke, or heart attack. Cause of death can also be due to a sudden event such as a motor vehicle accident, industrial or farm accident, and numerous other types of incidents.

Manner of death explains the nature of the death: natural, homicide, suicide, accident or undetermined. It's very rare for the manner of a death to be undetermined.

Most deaths do not require an autopsy to determine cause and manner of death. However, autopsies are performed on deaths in which cause and manner cannot be determined through the scene investigation, forensic external examination, and medical records review, and on all deaths of a suspicious nature.

Autopsies are scheduled with and only performed by board certified forensic pathologists at an International Association of Coroner and Medical Examiners (IACME) or NAME accredited autopsy suite, with Coroner Office staff attending whenever possible.

Often, when awaiting autopsy results, toxicology results or other test results, the cause and manner are listed as pending. As soon as all the necessary information is obtained, the final death certificate is issued. A pending cause of death status does not preclude families from honoring their loved one with disposition as appropriate for them. An initial death certificate is issued under the pending status that allows for disposition while awaiting the final death certificate.

Additional forensic specialists are available on a case-by-case basis such as the Washington State Forensic Anthropologist, the Washington State Odontologist, the Department of Entomology at Washington State University, and Integrated Plant Sciences at Washington State University.

The office uses an electronic case management system called the Medicolegal Death Investigation Log or, MDI Log. MDI Log is a comprehensive investigative report/database system that enables staff to review death scene investigation information from a secure internet site any time of day. Complete findings of the death investigation are distributed to families and law enforcement agencies as appropriate.

The Coroner coordinates with the Whitman County Public Health Officer, Dr. Brad Bowman, and the Whitman County Health Department when the cause of death threatens the public health of communities within Whitman County.

We extend our sincere gratitude to the Whitman County Board of Commissioners for their support of the Coroner's Office and the services we provide to the citizens of Whitman County.

DEFINITIONS

Cause of Death:

A term used to indicate the medical cause of death, listing the disease or injuries that caused death. Examples: congestive heart failure, renal failure, cancer, blunt force trauma, gunshot wound, etc.

Manner of Death:

A term used to indicate the type of death – Accident, Homicide, Natural, Pending, Suicide, Undetermined.

Accident – a death other than natural, where there is no evidence of intent, i.e. unintentional.

Homicide – a death due to the acts of another. Note that a death ruled a homicide by the Coroner’s Office is not necessarily a murder in the legal definition of the term.

Natural – a death solely by organic disease. If natural death is hastened by injury (such as a fall), the manner of death will not be considered natural.

Pending – a temporary designation for cause and/or manner when additional investigation, information and/or test results are required for certification. Pending is amended once all information and test results are received.

Suicide – a death as the result of a purposeful action, with intent (explicit or implicit) to end one’s life.

Undetermined – the manner of death assigned when there is insufficient evidence or information to assign the death as accident, homicide, suicide, or natural.

TRAINING/EXPERIENCE

Washington State Criminal Justice Training Commission (CJTC)

All medicolegal death investigators in the Coroner’s Office are trained pursuant to RCW 43.101.480. Additionally regular and ongoing training occurs throughout the year, including monthly deputy coroner meetings, annual full day hands-on scenario-based training with community partners, ongoing recertification training, and specialty training with law enforcement and EMS/fire agencies.

ASSOCIATIONS/MEMBERSHIP

Member of the Washington Association of Coroners and Medical Examiners (WACME)

Member of the International Association of Coroner and Medical Examiners (IACME)

CORONER OFFICE STAFF / ASSOCIATES

Annie Pillers, ABMDI Diplomate, EMT Coroner	Cassandra Richardson, BS Chemistry, BA Spanish, MS Forensic Medicine 8/2025 Chief Deputy Coroner
Scotty Anderson, ABMDI Diplomate, EMT Senior Deputy Coroner	Dylan Keller, DNP, EMT Deputy Coroner
Monte Griffin, Retired Law Enforcement Transport Driver	Paul Reavis, Retired Law Enforcement Transport Driver
Norman Thiersch, MD Board Certified Forensic Pathologist, Consultant	

2024 IN REVIEW

Reported Deaths / Coroner Investigations–Examinations–Toxicology / Notifications

All Deaths in Whitman County	Reported Deaths – Calls for Service to Coroner	Accepted JA (Jurisdiction Assumed) by Coroner	Declined NJA (No Jurisdiction Assumed) i.e. Hospice Hospital	Cases with Scene Response	Cases with Autopsy By Forensic Pathologist	Cases with Partial Autopsy	Cases with WCCO Forensic External Exam Only	Cases with Toxicology Performed
291	262	80	182	78	19	0	59	72

Manner of Death

Homicide	Suicide	Accident	Natural	N/A	Total
2	8	29	213	10 (2 Bones Non- Human, 8 Fetal Demise)	262

Homicide Deaths Involving

Firearms	Blunt Trauma	Stabbing	Motor Vehicle	Asphyxia	Other	Total
1	0	0	0	1	0	2

Suicide Deaths Involving

Firearms	Hanging	Poisoning/ Drugs	Jump/Fall	MVC	Stab/ Cuts	Other	TOTAL
5	1	2	0	0	0	0	8

Accidental Deaths Involving

Burns	Drowning	Drugs	Fall	MVC	Firearm	Other	TOTAL
0	1	8	10	5	0	5	29

Natural Deaths Involving

Neurologic	Genitourinary	Cardiac	Kidney	Pulmonary	Liver	Gastrointestinal	Cancer	Other	Total
66	4	61	14	20	3	2	37	6	213

Unidentified / Unclaimed (Cumulative)

Unidentified	Unclaimed
0	9

Organ Procurement Organization (OPO) Activity / Eye Bank (EB) Activity

WCCO OPO Referral	OPO Released	OPO Retrieved		WCCO EB Referral	EB Released	EB Retrieved
87	85	2		87	76	11

Law Enforcement Involved Deaths (Law)/In-Custody Deaths (Custody)

Law	Custody	Total
0	0	0

Infant and Youth Deaths (Birth-age 17)

Infant Up to 12 months	Youth 1 to 5	Youth 6 to 10	Youth 11 to 17	Total
0	1	0	2	3
	Natural		1 Natural 1 Suicide	

Age of Deceased

<1	1 to 5	6 to 10	11 to 17	18 to 25	26-44	45-64	65+
0	1	0	2	5	15	28	201

Other

Decedent Transported To Exam Facility	Cremations Authorized By Office	Exhumations	Notifications For No Jurisdiction Assumed Non-Coroner Investigations
78	0	0	0