



Office of the State Forensic Examiner

Annual Activity Report January 1, 2012, to December 31, 2012

The authority and responsibilities of the Office of the State Forensic Examiner are provided in Chapter 11-19, Sections 11-19.1-18 through 11.19.1-20 of the North Dakota Century Code. The Office of the State Forensic Examiner accepts cases referred from county coroners or acting county coroners, performs postmortem examinations on the bodies, and signs Certificates of Death. It is the goal of the state forensic examiner to provide vital information needed by the county coroner, the family of the deceased, the North Dakota Department of Health, law enforcement, and many other agencies involved in the investigation of deaths.

Cases are referred to the forensic examiner when there are significant questions regarding cause and manner of death, if there is the potential for criminal charges, for assistance with ongoing investigations, and if there are other significant issues or questions that will remain unanswered if an autopsy is not done. The county coroner referring the case is responsible for transporting the case to the forensic examiner's morgue facility in Bismarck, N.D.

During this reporting period, 367 cases were referred to the state forensic examiner. Complete autopsies were done on 364 of these referrals. External examination without an autopsy was done on three individuals. Toxicology studies consisting of blood alcohols and at least a basic drug screen are a routine component of the autopsy. Forty-four (44) of the individuals referred to this office died as a result of combined prescription drugs and/or combined prescription drugs and alcohol poisoning. The classification/manner and number of the 2012 referrals are categorized as follows: **Natural Cause – 81; Accident – 139; Suicide – 102; Homicide – 19; Pending Investigation; - 8; Undetermined – 18.** The forensic examiner office experienced a 13.6% increase in the number of autopsies performed this reporting period from the previous year.

In addition to the referrals discussed above, the Office of the State Forensic Examiner provided consultations to county coroners on 209 cases, a 70% increase from the previous year. Requests for solid organs, eyes and tissue were made by organ-procurement programs on 31 referrals. Referrals to the office continue to come from all regions of the state (e.g., northwest, southwest, northeast, southeast and central).

The Office of the State Forensic Examiner is staffed by three full-time employees: the state forensic examiner, the forensic administrator to the state forensic examiner, and an autopsy technician. Support personnel for the office include four part-time/temporary autopsy assistants and one part-time/temporary administrative assistant/transcriptionist. After-hours and weekend coverage is provided by board certified medicolegal death investigators via State Radio's dispatcher to the county coroners or law enforcement agencies needing assistance with a referral or consultation.

The state forensic examiner is actively involved in death investigation training. The office routinely conducts educational seminars and provides lectures designed to improve death investigation to county coroners, law enforcement agencies, medical personnel, state and local government agencies, and other groups involved with death investigations. The state forensic examiner also participates in Child Fatality Review Committee activities and provides reports and guidelines in child death investigations to this committee. The state forensic examiner is also a member of the North Dakota Domestic Violence Review Commission in which domestic violence death are reviewed that have occurred in the state.

Referrals and Consultations to the State Forensic Examiner January 1, 2012, to December 31, 2012

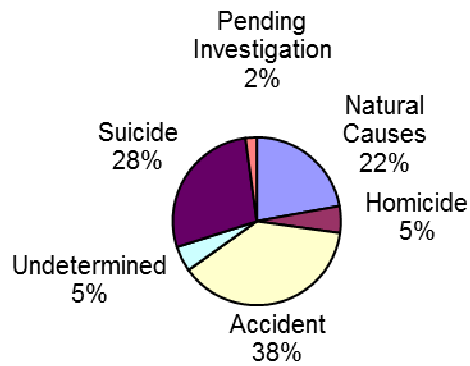
Referrals consist of cases referred to the forensic examiner by county coroners for an examination or autopsy.

Consultations consist of discussing the circumstances surrounding a death with the county coroners and advising them about handling the case locally.

COUNTY	REFERRALS	CONSULTATIONS
Adams	1	1
Barnes	8	6
Benson	3	1
Billings	2	
Bottineau	2	2
Bowman	2	2
Burke	1	8
Burleigh	55	9
Cass	58	19
Cavalier	1	3
Dickey		4
Divide	2	
Dunn	3	3
Eddy	4	2
Emmons	2	1
Foster	1	
Golden Valley		3
Grand Forks		
Grant	2	1
Griggs		
Hettinger		2
Kidder		1
LaMoure	2	
Logan		
McHenry	1	
McIntosh		1
McKenzie	18	3
McLean	9	5
Mercer	4	1
Morton	11	2
Mountrail	19	13

COUNTY	REFERRALS	CONSULTATIONS
Nelson		1
Oliver	1	1
Pembina	3	1
Pierce	2	7
Ramsey	13	2
Ransom	3	1
Renville	1	
Richland	4	4
Rolette	12	15
Sargent		1
Sheridan		1
Sioux	8	
Slope	2	
Stark	10	9
Steele	1	1
Stutsman	13	11
Towner	1	
Traill	1	13
Walsh	2	2
Ward	40	27
Wells	1	1
Williams	38	18
Totals	367	209

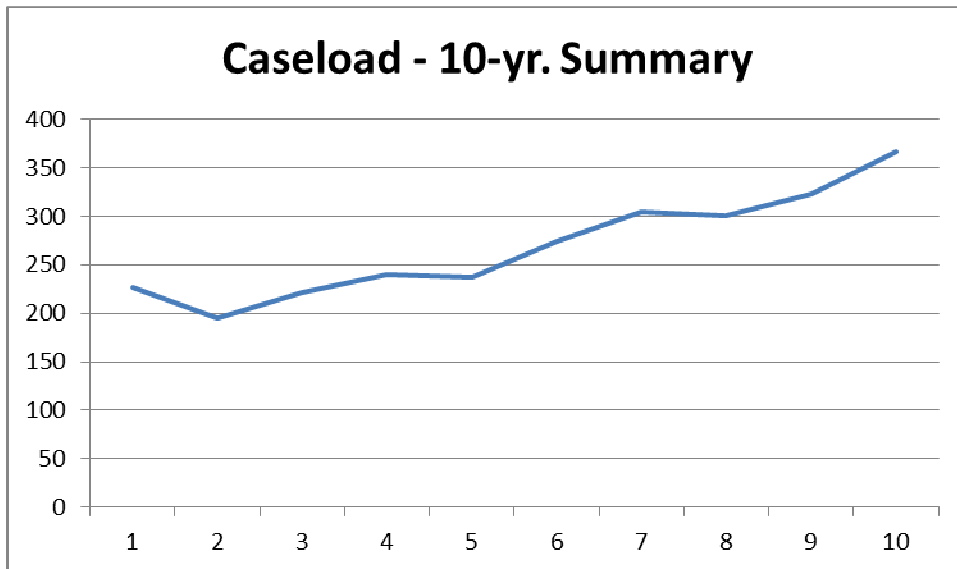
**Coroner Referrals (367)
2012
Manner of Death**



Manner of Death
Totals for 2012

Natural Causes	81
Accident	139
Suicide	102
Pending Inv.	8
Undetermined	18
Homicide	19
Total	367

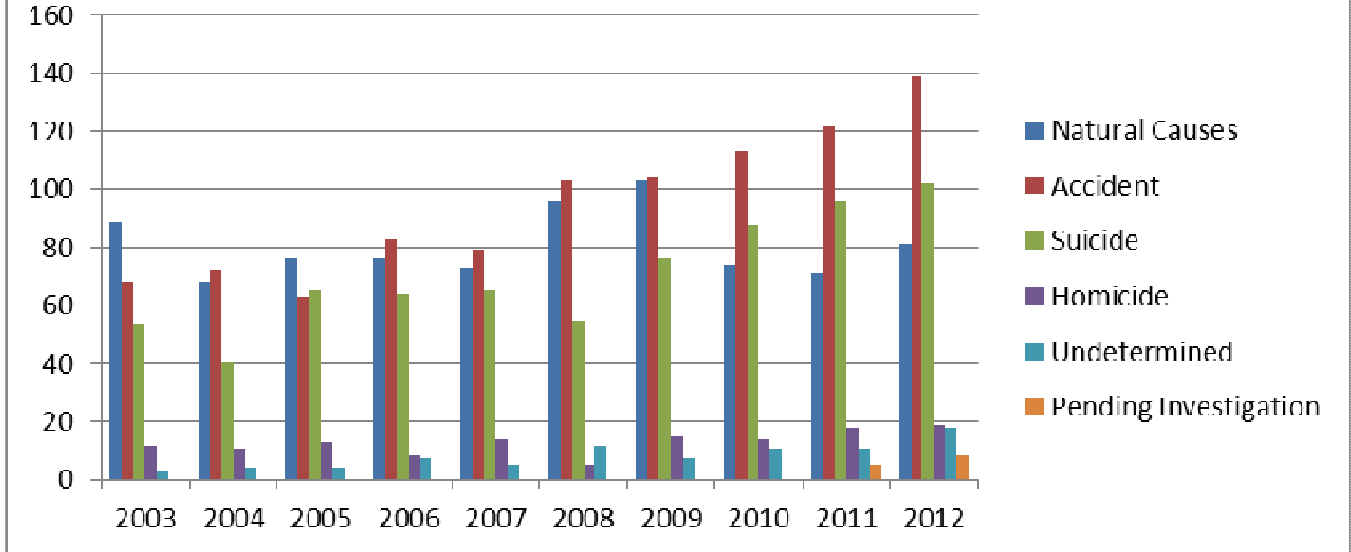
Caseload - 10-yr. Summary



Year	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
	226	195	221	240	237	274	305	300	323	367

(A caseload increase of 54.85% from 2007 to 2012)

Manner of Death - 10-yr. Summary



	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Natural Causes	89	68	76	76	73	96	103	74	71	81
Accident	68	72	63	83	79	103	104	113	122	139
Suicide	54	40	65	64	65	55	76	88	96	102
Homicide	12	11	13	8	14	5	15	14	18	19
Undetermined	3	4	4	7	5	12	7	11	11	18
Pending Investigation									5	8
Total	226	195	221	240	236	271	305	300	323	367

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