SUMMIT COUNTY
COLORADO

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2015 Summit County Deaths

Breakdown by Cause and Manner of Death

Natural
31 cardiac
12 hospice
2 respiratory failure
1 amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (Lou Gehrig's disease)
1 cirrhosis
1 cerebral vascular accident (CVA)
2 gastrointestinal bleed
2 sepsis

Accidental
1 smoke inhalation from house fire
2 blunt force trauma (both skiers)
1 multiple skull fractures (skier)
1 subarachnoid bleed (skier)
1 helicopter crash
3 fall
7 drug overdose (4 non-prescribed Fentanyl)
4 motor vehicle crash
1 drowning

Suicide
6 gunshot wound
2 asphyxiation by hanging
2 prescription drug overdose

Homicide
1 gunshot wound
1 manual strangulation

Undetermined
1 skull found on U.S. Forest Service land near Frisco

Transfers and Autopsies
9 cases were transfer of jurisdiction cases, meaning the incident that lead to the death originated in Summit County, and the actual death occurred in another county after being transferred to a hospital on the Front Range. These cases are included in the 2015 Summit County totals.

26 autopsies were performed in an effort to determine a definitive cause of death.

Trends and Comments
2015 was a busy year for the Summit County Coroner's Office. We had 87 deaths recorded for the year, compared to 60 in 2014. This is an all-time high, exceeding the previous record of 76 in 2013.

With the economy improving and gasoline prices low, it appears that people are traveling more. With more activity in our community, we tend to see higher numbers of fatalities. Of the 87 deaths in 2015, 31 (36%) were out-of-town visitors, and those were primarily cardiac-related deaths. Summit County residents accounted for the majority of the deaths at 56 (64%), a ratio that is consistent with years past.

As in previous years, the most common causes of death are natural, primarily cardiac-related events: Of the 52 natural deaths, 31 were cardiac; there were 12 hospice deaths, which were mostly cancer related.

Summit County experienced its first recorded murder-suicide, which involved a local couple. We also had a female homicide victim, who was left in Summit County after being beaten and strangled in Utah.

The number of suicide deaths was the same as 2014, with 10 total. Of these, 9 were male and 1 was female. The age breakdown for these is as follows:

- 18-35 years old: 4 deaths
- 36-60 years old: 4 deaths
- 61 and older: 1 death.

The number of accidental deaths increased from 12 in 2014 to 22 in 2015. This was due primarily to the sharp increase in accidental overdoses, with the drug Fentanyl being the leading drug abused. There were 4 deaths from motor vehicle crashes; of those, 2 were wearing seatbelts. There was also a hit and run causing the death of a pedestrian.

There were 4 snow-sport-related deaths, a slight decrease from the 6 we saw in 2014. All 4 were skiers; 2 were helmeted. There were no avalanche-related deaths in 2015.

Alcohol and drugs continue to play a large role in deaths in Summit County. There were 3 deaths directly related to alcohol abuse, and it was a contributing factor in numerous others, including 2 motor vehicle crashes. Two decedents had high THC levels: One was a suicide by gunshot, and the other had coronary artery disease.

Regan Wood
Summit County Coroner