

DEPARTMENT OF THE MEDICAL EXAMINER

POWERS, DUTIES AND FUNCTIONS

The Department of the Medical Examiner (MED) as mandated by the Revised Charter of the City and County of Honolulu serves the public through the investigation of sudden, unexpected, violent, and suspicious deaths. The purpose of such an investigation is to discover, document, and preserve the medical, anatomic, or evidentiary findings, which will allow the department to determine the cause and manner of death, to identify the time of death and injury, to confirm or deny the account of how death occurred, to determine or exclude other contributory or causative factors to the death, and to provide expert testimony in criminal and civil litigation.

The MED is staffed by professionals to include physicians specialized in the area of forensic pathology, medical examiner investigators, laboratory technologists, autopsy assistants, and administrative personnel. The physicians are board certified in the specialty of anatomic pathology and/or forensic pathology.

HIGHLIGHTS

The Department's community outreach educational program continued this year and included presentations on and off site to at risk teenagers relating to DUI and drug abuse prevention, and to students interested in forensic careers as well as professional groups.

The Department continued to actively participate in multi-disciplinary state-wide child death review programs and inter-agency domestic violence fatality reviews, aimed at prevention by identification of risk factors.

The Department, as a community benefit, participates in a donor organ and tissue procurement program. The Department continues to participate in the Honolulu Heart Program which includes aging studies of the brain in pre-registered enrollees. The Department continues to participate in multi-echelon interagency and City mass casualty planning. The Department continued its participation in the National Missing and Unidentified Persons System (NamUS) to identify unidentified remains.

The Department, as a community benefit, continues to participate in the John A. Burns School of Medicine pathology training for medical students, medical transitional program residents, and pathology residents. The Department also provides opportunities for on-site internships for Chaminade University forensic science undergraduate and graduate students.

**SUMMARY OF STATISTICAL REPORT OF
CASES HANDLED BY DEPARTMENT
FISCAL YEAR 2013**

The office investigated 2237 deaths this past year as compared to 2213 in Fiscal Year 2012. The MED assumed jurisdiction in 799 cases and performed autopsies on 536 cases and 263 external examinations which included toxicological testing of body fluids.

Next-of-kin authorized organ donation in 53 cases. Of the 799 jurisdiction cases, the MED investigators visited 390 original death scenes. These scenes are where the incident occurred and, therefore, are an integral part of a thorough death investigation. For example, if the death of a young child occurs in a medical institution, in addition to visiting the medical institution, the MED investigator goes to the original scene of the incident.

Number of deaths investigated	2237
..... Jurisdiction assumed in	799
..... Violent deaths	489
..... Autopsied	338
..... External Examinations.....	151
..... Violent deaths (undetermined manner) ..	29
..... Autopsied	25
..... External Examinations	4
..... Unclassified (undetermined manner)	16
..... Autopsied	16
..... External Examinations	0
..... Non-violent deaths	263
..... Autopsied	157
..... External Examinations	106
..... Historical remains	0
..... Non-human artifacts.....	1
..... Jurisdiction released to private physician (death within 24 hours).....	658
..... Attended/other deaths reported ...	780
Total autopsies performed by Medical Examiner	536
Total external examinations performed by Medical Examiner.	263
Total number of bodies transported to Morgue	776
Total organ/tissue harvesting	53
Total original scene of incident visited	390
Total no body, no autopsy (DC jurisdiction)	93
Total unidentified skeletal remains.....	0

**LABORATORY PROCEDURES CONDUCTED
FISCAL YEAR 2013**

Laboratory Chemical Tests	1107
Ethanol Tests.....	695
Toxicology Screen	954
Toxicology Sent Out	344
Hematoxylin and Eosin Slides Prepared.....	3079
Special Slides Prepared	131

Laboratory procedures that include toxicological analysis, blood alcohol determinations, preparation of microscopic slides for histological examinations, and various other chemical analyses of different types of body fluids continue to be a very important aspect of investigation of deaths occurring under our jurisdiction.

Drug-related deaths, including abuse of prescription medication, continue to be a concern. Cocaine, opiates, Oxycontin, and methamphetamine continue to be detected in toxicological screens of deaths investigated by the Department. Methamphetamine continues to be associated with violent deaths.

**BUDGET AND AUTHORIZED PERSONNEL
FISCAL YEAR 2013**

Budget Expenditures		\$1,494,142.36
..... Salaries	\$979,464.41	
..... Current Expenses.....	\$514,677.95	
..... Equipment	0	
..... Positions.....	19	

**CLASSIFICATION OF VIOLENT DEATHS
FISCAL YEAR 2013**

The number of violent deaths increased to 522 compared to 497 last fiscal year. There were 252 other accidental deaths this past year compared to 227 in FY 2012. There was a decrease in the number of homicides, 15 this year compared to 17 the previous year.

Violent Deaths.....	522
..... Homicide	15
..... Asphyxia	1
..... Blunt trauma	1
..... Child abuse..	1
..... Fall.....	3
..... Gunshot.....	4
..... Other	1
..... Sharp Force Trauma	1
..... Stabbing	3
..... Suicide	111
..... Asphyxia	5
..... Drowning	1
..... Fall.....	18
..... Gunshot.....	17
..... Hanging	51
..... Other	1
..... Poisoning.....	15
..... Sharp force trauma	2
..... Traffic	1
..... Traffic	71
..... Water-Related	38
..... Industrial.....	6
..... Other Accident	252
..... Undetermined.....	29
..... Blunt Trauma	2
..... Drowning	1
..... Fall.....	8
..... Poisoning.....	16
..... Traffic	2

NOTE: Some deaths are reported in 2 different categories.