

# Coroner's Office

LAKE COUNTY, IL

2019 ANNUAL REPORT



## Message to the County Board

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

The main duties of the Coroner are to determine the cause and manner of death and certify deaths reported to the Lake County Coroner's Office. 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 undetermined.

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, Deputy Coroner Investigators are available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

With the skill and experience of the death investigators and board-certified forensic pathologists, we believe the quality of death investigations in Lake County is among the best in the State. The death scene investigation reports filed by the investigators are very thorough and supply comprehensive information to the Lake County Coroner's Office.

Our Coroner and Deputy Coroner Investigators also extend their duties to the living by answering questions and addressing concerns regarding deaths within the county. Deputy Coroner Investigators frequently make personal contact with family members of a deceased and assist them by providing appropriate answers regarding the circumstances of their loved one's death. Deputy Coroner Investigators are supplied with a pamphlet for distribution to families which provides answers to common questions and facts about autopsies. Additionally, it provides resources pertaining to grief counseling.

In 2019, we continued to implement Coroner's Inquests for all officer involved deaths and in-custody deaths. This has been a very important part of maintaining transparency within the Coroner's Office. Unfortunately, this year also contained the largest explosion this county has ever seen. We had reports that people felt the explosion 30 miles away. Fortunately, Dr. Cooper has had extensive experience in this arena; working at Ground Zero, after being deployed to New York City on September 12, 2001 and New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina. The "feather in our cap" of 2019 was receiving Accreditation from the International Association of Coroners and Medical Examiners. After a 9 month process, we were the 2nd office in Illinois and 1 of 26 offices in the nation to receive this recognition. This is an incredible honor for our office and it shows that we conduct death investigations and assist our citizens to the highest level possible.

We extend our sincere gratitude to the Lake County Board of Commissioners for their support of the Coroner's death investigation program and the services we provide to the citizens of the Lake County.



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## **Biography of the Coroner**

Dr. Howard I. Cooper graduated in 1991, from Loyola University of Chicago. Since graduation, he has accomplished more than most in Dentistry and Forensics. One of his most important attributes is his passion for knowledge, which aids him in treating patients and helping families of Lake County.

He has earned Fellowship and Mastership awards from the Academy of General Dentistry and was one of three people in the world to earn the Lifelong Learning and Service Recognition award the first year it was given. These awards can only be attained after taking thousands of hours of continuing dental education and passing a lengthy examination. He has also received Fellowship awards from the Academy of Dentistry International, the International Congress of Oral Implantologists, the American College of Dentists, the International College of Dentists and the Misch International Implant Institute. He has received both Mastership and Diplomate Awards from the International Congress of Oral Implantologists, as well.

Dr. Cooper is also involved in organized dentistry. He has held multiple positions in many dental societies, including the position of President for the Lake County Dental Society, the Chicago Academy of General Dentistry, and the Illinois Academy of General Dentistry. Dr. Cooper is a published author on the topic of forensic dentistry and lectures on that topic across the country.

Dr. Cooper has served his country by being a part of two federal government teams: Disaster Mortuary Operational Response Team (DMORT) and Disaster Mortuary Operational Response Team Weapons of Mass Destruction All Hazards (DMORT WMD All Hazards).

The morning of September 11, 2001, Dr. Cooper was activated, along with other members of DMORT, and the following day were flown on an Air Force C-130 from O'Hare Airport to New York. The team had many functions, but Dr. Cooper worked at Ground Zero and at the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner helping to identify victims of the horrific attack.

After Hurricane Katrina, he was activated as part of the DMORT WMD All Hazards team. His task at this event was victim recovery, decontamination, and identification. Dr. Cooper spent 5 weeks in the New Orleans area helping to bring closure to the victim's families.

In 2011, Dr. Cooper was awarded the Response Team Distinguished Member of the Year Award from the National Disaster Medical System (NDMS).

As the Lake County Coroner, Dr. Cooper enjoys working with and helping the families of Lake County, as well as, the fire and law enforcement communities.

When Dr. Cooper finds some spare time, he spends it traveling and photographing the U.S. in his motorhome with his wonderful family.





## Illinois Coroners and Medical Examiners Creed

Birth and death are the only two universal human experiences.

Birth is the most important biological event in the life of any human being. If it does not occur, there is no being. If there is no person, no legal rights and duties arise, for the law relates to rights and duties of the living people, not inanimate objects.

Death, on the other hand, is the most important legal event for all human beings. When it occurs, all legal rights and duties devolving upon the person during his life span in a civilized jurisdiction are terminated. All persons with whom the deceased had legal relations at that moment in time are also directly affected by the occurrence of death. Moreover, both the decedent and the survivors may be greatly affected legally by how the death occurred, what actually happened, why it occurred, and precisely when it occurred. Above all, who dies must be absolutely determined, and where death occurred is positively required for legal jurisdiction over the decedent is based upon a geographical location.

The law becomes extremely active when a person dies. Wealth is redistributed. Contracts are altered. A wrongful death may give rise to tortious claims. Tax obligations are always present. Public social benefits and private insurance policies are paid. Criminal laws may be invoked. Creditors must be satisfied, and debtors located. Spouse and children, heirs, and next-of-kin have their attachments rearranged. It is not surprising that for centuries the sovereign state has had an overriding interest in the death of its subjects or citizens. The ancient office of Coroner, or the modern office of Medical Examiner, along with the state-licensed physician is legally charged with significant duties in answering the pertinent questions relating to death: Who, Where, When, What, How, Why. Only when these questions have been answered correctly, can all the proper legal issues arising at death be effectively handled for the proper administration of justice.

Although the legal aspects of death are most important, certainly the religious and humanitarian heritages of a civilized society also command a deep concern over the death of a human being. The spiritual faith in a religion as well as the humanitarian concern for a fellow human being demand correct answers to the questions of death: who, where, how, when, and why. Human death obligates the living to acquire accurate facts on which to apply just laws for each deceased member of the human race.

The obligation for proper death investigation is mandatory for legal and religious humanitarian satisfactions in the human society. Let those responsible for death investigations take heed that they labor not only for the State but, also, for God.

Our commitment... care of the Deceased; Concern for the Living...

*Permission given to ICA by Kenneth S. Field, M.B., Chairman, Board of Trustees, The Forensic Sciences Foundation, April 22, 1988.*



## **Lake County Coroner's Mission Statement**

The mission of the Lake County Coroner's Office is to conduct honest and independent death investigations based on the facts and evidence, to protect and serve those who have gone before us, their families, and the general public.

## **Lake County Coroner's Core Values**

The strategic plan for accomplishing the Lake County Coroner's Office mission must begin by identifying core values which need to be preserved and defended by the Lake County Coroner's Office in performing its statutory mission.

Those values are:

- Rigorous obedience of the Constitution of the United States
- Respect for the dignity of all those we serve
- Compassion
- Fairness
- Uncompromising personal and institutional integrity

These values do not exhaust the goals which we wish to achieve, but they capsulize them, as well as, can be done in a few words. Our values must be fully understood, practiced, shared, vigorously defended, and preserved.

Observance of these core values is our guarantee of excellence and propriety in performing the Lake County Coroner's Office mission and medico-legal investigative functions. Rigorous obedience to constitutional principles ensures that we always remember that constitutional guarantees are more important than the outcome of any single interview, search for evidence, or investigation. Respect for the dignity of all whom we serve reminds us to wield power with restraint. Fairness and compassion ensure that we treat everyone with the highest regard for dignity and respect for civil and human rights. Personal and institutional integrity reinforce each other and are owed to the county in exchange for the sacred trust and great authority conferred upon us.

We who serve the community must regard this trust as the authorization for our power because the success of the Lake County Coroner's Office, in accomplishing its mission, is directly related to the support and cooperation of the citizens of Lake County. These core values are the fiber which holds together the vitality of our institution.



## **What is the duty of the Coroner as Mandated by Illinois Compiled Statute?**

*Chapter 55; 5/3-3007: Each Coroner shall be the conservative of the peace of his County, and in the performance of his/her duties shall have the same powers as the Sheriff.*

## **What are the responsibilities of the Coroner?**

The responsibilities of the Coroner are to ensure that the proper scientific studies are performed:

- Autopsy
- Toxicology tests
- Microscopic examinations
- Bacteriology
- X-rays
- Fingerprinting
- Taking and gathering reports
- Notification of death to families
- On-scene investigation
- Photographing
- Transportation of victims assuring chain of evidence security
- Evidence collecting
- Dental examination and identification
- Meeting with survivors
- Presiding at inquests
- Issuance of Death Certificates and Cremation Permits
- Cooperating with:
  - Medical Agencies
  - Funeral Directors
  - Law Enforcement Agencies
  - Fire & Rescue Departments

And others...



## **Who Reports the Death to the Coroner?**

*Section 5/3-3020: Every law enforcement official, funeral director, ambulance attendant, hospital director or administrator or person having custody of the body and any physician in attendance upon such a decedent at the time of his/her death, shall notify the Coroner promptly. Any such person failing to do so shall be guilty of a Class A misdemeanor.*

## **Types of Deaths Reportable to the Coroner:**

*Chapter 55; Section 5/3-3013, as amended, mandates that specific types of death be referred to the Coroner's Office for investigation and determining cause and manner of death (see list below). These deaths include sudden and unexpected deaths, accidental deaths, and violent deaths. The Coroner has the authority under this Law shall go to the place where the dead body is and take charge of same and shall make a preliminary investigation into the circumstances of the death.*

## **Deaths Reportable to the Coroner:**

- Violent death (e.g., strangulation, gunshot, stabbing, poisoning, etc.)
- Accidental deaths (e.g., falls, drowning, motor vehicle collisions, burns, overdose, etc.)
- Death of a prisoner (e.g., deaths in any county or city jail while imprisoned or in custody).
- Suspicious Circumstances (e.g., Unidentified Bodies or events surrounding death)
- Sudden and Unexpected deaths (e.g., all deaths during a surgical procedure, in recovery, Occupational related deaths)
- anesthesia-related, unexpected natural death
- Without medical attendance within 24 hours of death:
- In cases of chronic illness, the attending physician may sign the death certificate if s/he can be reasonably certain of the cause of death.
- Unexpected infant deaths





## **Who Signs the Death Certificate?**

*Section 5/3-3018: Every Coroner, as soon as he/she shall have completed his/her investigation of the cause and circumstances to death coming within his/her jurisdiction, shall issue a death certificate.*

## **What Authority Does the Coroner Have in Regard to Investigation into the Circumstances of the Death?**

*Section 5/3-3013: In cases of apparent suicide, homicide or accidental death, the Coroner may...summon a jury of 6 persons... and conduct an inquest into the manner of death. All deaths in State institutions and all deaths of wards of the State in private care facilities... shall be reported to the Coroner of the County in which the facility is located.*

## **What Authority Does the Coroner Have in Regard to the Dead Human Body?**

*Section 5/3-3019: No dead body...or the personal property of such a deceased person, shall be handled, moved, disturbed, embalmed or removed from the place of death by any person, except with the permission of the Coroner. Any person knowingly violating the provisions of this Section is guilty of Class A misdemeanor.*

*Section 5/3-3015: Where a death has occurred and the circumstances concerning the death are suspicious, obscure, mysterious and the cause of death cannot be established definitely except by autopsy, it shall be the duty of the Coroner to cause an autopsy to be performed.*

*Section 5/3-3021: The Coroner shall release the body of the decedent to the next-of-kin or to the funeral director selected by such persons. Authorization of appropriate next-of-kin is required by the Lake County Coroner's Office.*



## The History of the Lake County Coroner's Office

The Office of Coroner developed in England approximately 800 to 900 years ago. Coroners were originally referred to as "crowners", the name deriving from the fact that they were appointed by the Crown to represent the King's interest in the investigation of violent, unexplained or suspicious deaths, and in the disposition of any personal or real property that became available under the existing laws following a homicide or suicide. The Latin word for crown is "corona" and, hence, in later years, the name of the office came to be called:

"CORONER"

Certainly, any history requires one to "reflect" on the past and the year 2019 is no exception to that. Unfortunately, there is so little historical data concerning the Office of the Lake County Coroner.

We do know that Starr Titus was the first Lake County Coroner, having been elected to office in 1839. It is unknown how long he served in that capacity, but we do know that Doc Taylor began his 45-year tenure in 1901 and served until 1946. Following Taylor was Gar Leaf, Paddy White, Pat Clavey, Oscar Lind, Mickey Babcox, Barbara Richardson, serving from 1982-2003, Jim Whipper, Dr. Richard Keller, Artis Yancey, Dr. Tom Rudd, and currently Dr. Howard I. Cooper.

The first morgue for Lake County, approved in 1968, was located in the lower level, commonly known as the basement, of the southwest corner of the courthouse. Then in 1980, it was moved to a county-converted service station at the corner of Utica and Washington Streets, becoming a "state-of-the-art" forensic science facility with the addition of a toxicology laboratory along with the morgue. This facility was a first for coroners throughout the State of Illinois.

The next chapter of Lake County history was written in 1994, when blueprints were turned into a renovated bank building project, and the entire operation of the Lake County Coroner's Office, administrative and deputy offices, morgue and laboratory moved into the newly-renovated building at 26 North Martin Luther King Jr. Avenue, Waukegan.





**Lake County Coroner's Office Staff**



**Howard I. Cooper, D.D.S., M.A.G.D.**

Coroner



**Jason Patt, D-ABMDI**

Chief



**Tammy Mayer, D-ABMDI**

Commander



**Lake County Coroner's Office Staff**



**Mike Reid, D-ABMDI**

Lieutenant



**Steve Carroll, D-ABMDI**

Sergeant



**Robert James, Jr. D-ABMDI**

Deputy Coroner / Investigator



**Lake County Coroner's Office Staff**



**Sarah Pendley, D-ABMDI**  
Deputy Coroner / Investigator



**Dana Dingman**  
Deputy Coroner / Investigator



**James Ashworth**  
Deputy Coroner / Investigator

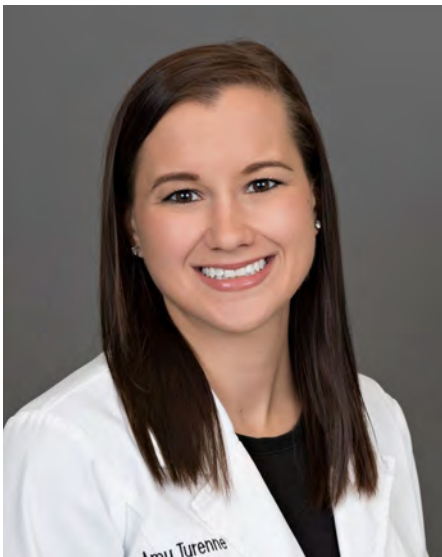




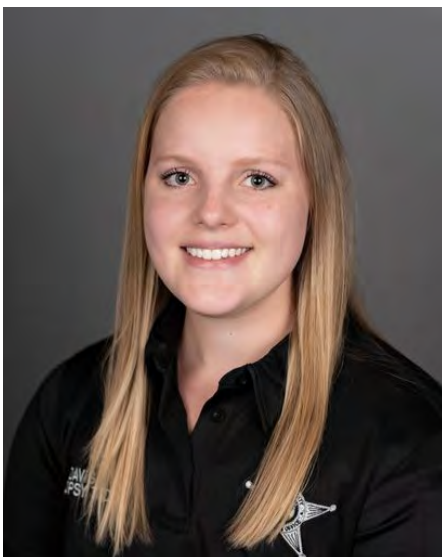
**Lake County Coroner's Office Staff**



**Kiersten Reif, D-ABMDI**  
Deputy Coroner / Investigator



**Amy Turenne**  
Forensic Toxicologist



**Caroline Davis**  
Autopsy Technician



**Lake County Coroner's Office Staff**



**Alex Reynosa**

Executive Administrative Assistant



**Lisa Thommes**

Administrative Assistant





### K9 Bones

K9 Bones is a 3 1/2 year old Belgian Malinois. He came to us, via grant funds, from DAS Charitable Fund. We are in our second year with Bones, and he has been a tremendous resource to the citizens of Lake County, along with our neighboring counties. K9 Bones is used for missing person searches, cadaver searches, firearm related item recoveries, and at times grief assistance.







## 2019 New Hires: New Faces in the Lake County Coroner's Office



### Kiersten Reif, D-ABMDI

Prior to being hired at the Lake County Coroner's Office in January 2019 as a full-time Deputy Coroner, Kiersten attended DePaul University, earning her bachelor's degree with a double major in Psychology and Communication Studies and a minor in Spanish. She previously worked as a police officer in Highland Park, Riverwoods, and Bannockburn. She has a special interest in motor vehicle crashes and was previously a member of the Major Crash Assistance Team (MCAT) in Lake County. She recently passed the American Board of Medicolegal Death Investigation examination, becoming a Diplomate, and looks forward to continuing to work and learn in the field of death investigation.

### Caroline Davis

Prior to being hired at the Lake County Coroner's Office in September 2019 as a part-time Autopsy Technician, Caroline attended Lewis University, earning her bachelor's degree in Biology with a minor in Criminal Justice. She had completed internships with the Will County Coroner's Office and job-shadowed at the Lake County Coroner's Office. She is also currently a Master at Arms in the Navy Reserves. She has had an interest in death investigation since her senior year of high school and ultimately hopes to become a Deputy Coroner.





## Office Accomplishments

### 2<sup>nd</sup> Executive Administrative Assistant Position

A second Executive Administrative Assistant position was approved in 2019 and filled in January 2020. In the 2019 fiscal year, the administrative staff processed 3,025 cremation permits while performing other vital office procedures. Additionally, they created and sent out over 500 letters to next of kin for Coroner death cases and answered over 38,000 phone calls. With this new position, the Lake County Coroner's Office can continue to run smoothly and efficiently, even with the increase in death calls and coroner cases. Adding this new staff member to our office has proven to enhance the service, productivity and operation of the Lake County Coroner's Office.

### American Board of Medicolegal Death Investigator (ABMDI) Certification for Qualified Deputy Coroners

This certification demonstrates the high standards of professional practice and ethical conduct when performing all death investigations. It is an honor and quite an accomplishment to say 75% of our eligible Deputy Coroners/ Investigators who are Board eligible have passed the Boards. We are very excited that our remaining two deputies are currently registered to take their examination.



### Annual Police and Fire Appreciation Night

In 2019, the Lake County Coroner's Office again hosted the Annual Police and Fire Appreciation Night. This is an evening where Dr. Cooper, and the Lake County Coroner's Office staff, host a dinner to show our appreciation for all of the Police and Fire Department personnel in Lake County. We hosted two nights this year, in different parts of the county, and both were very well attended!







## Lake County Coroner's Office Accreditation

On September 22, 2019, the Lake County Coroner's Office was featured in an article in the Chicago Tribune titled "Lake County Coroner's Office receives recognition, accreditation from international coroners group." The article discussed the process through which the Lake County Coroner's Office earned accreditation from the International Association of Coroners and Medical Examiners.





## **International Association of Coroners & Medical Examiners**

*Collaboration · Education · Accreditation*

Dedicated to the promotion of excellence in medicolegal death investigation through collaboration, education and accreditation.

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# **PRESS RELEASE**

The International Association of Coroners and Medical Examiners announced today ***Lake County Coroner's Office*** has received accreditation by the association.

***Lake County Coroner's Office*** self-submitted to this process for the purpose of ensuring the operating policies, procedures and practices are within international guidelines.

***Lake County Coroner's Office*** was subjected to review of 230 standards including administrative, forensic, investigative and facility review.

IACME requires 100% compliance of mandatory standards and 90% of all applicable standards.

IACME extends its compliments to ***Lake County Coroner's Office*** for submitting to this level of review.

“When an agency elects to subject themselves to this process it clearly indicates their desire to stand to peer review and demonstrates to the public and stakeholders a strong desire to provide excellence in service provision.”

The completion of this process which is for five years indicates a professionalism and compassion by ***Lake County Coroner's Office***.

IACME congratulates ***Lake County Coroner's Office*** and Coroner Howard Cooper for the diligence in complying with these standards leading the way in service and compassion for those they serve and their community.



## Community Outreach

In 2019, the Lake County Coroner's Office continued to provide outreach and education to the public. We are committed to providing the public with information and education on both statistical information, and the workings of the office. The office also allowed numerous job shadow and internship opportunities for individuals interested in possibly pursuing a career in forensics.



Staff from the office provided education to students at various schools in both classroom instruction and career fairs.

In 2019, the Coroner's Office conducted 26 group tours. The tours were given to high school classes, youth leadership organizations, and the Boy Scouts, to name a few. The tours consisted of both education on the laws and duties of the Coroner's Office, as well as, a tour of the physical building and explanation of the various office processes, such as autopsies and scene investigations. Most importantly, we talk about "Making Good Choices."







## Community Outreach

In September of 2019, the Coroner's Office participated in the Annual Law Enforcement Expo. The event was held at Gurnee Mills Shopping Center. The office provided a booth and one of the Coroner Vehicles. The booth was manned by Coroner's Office staff who provided information and handed out promotional items to the attending members of the public.



Additionally, in December 2019, the Coroner's Office, in conjunction with the Lake County Sheriff's Office, participated in the Shop with a Sheriff event. Each year, local children are selected to attend this event and shop for holiday presents with law enforcement agency staff members.





## Commitment to Excellence

In addition to Dr. Howard Cooper's commitment to **PROTECT LIFE and PREVENT DEATH** through his presentations at local schools, municipal fire, rescue, police and educational agencies, members of the Coroner's staff currently are involved with different committees and coalitions, one of which is the Lake County Opioid Initiative Program, a Lake County based coalition to coordinate comprehensive drug abuse prevention efforts in Lake County. Plans are in place for staff to continue to play an active role in Emergency Management and other safety coalitions, as well.



Illinois Coroners and Medical Examiners Association



AMERICAN ACADEMY OF FORENSIC SCIENCES

SOMDI Society of Medicolegal Death Investigators







## Coroner's Inquest

Coroner Inquests were the standard for every case, until the law changed in 2007, giving the Coroner the ability to determine Cause and Manner of Death, without a jury. Prior to Dr. Cooper being elected, the last Coroner's Inquest in Lake County was held in 2006.

In 2017, Dr. Howard Cooper resurrected Inquests for all officer-involved deaths, deaths in custody and any deaths in which the manner of death is questionable. This insures transparency of the entire investigation. In 2019, the Lake County Coroner's Office completed five inquests to determine the manner of death.

2019 Inquests	Case Type	Jury-Ruled Manner of Death
02/07/2019	Officer Involved	Suicide
02/07/2019	Officer Involved	Homicide
07/11/2019	Officer Involved	Homicide
07/11/2019	Officer Involved	Homicide
11/21/2019	Officer Involved	Accident

## What is an Inquest?

A Coroner's Inquest is neither a civil nor a criminal trial proceeding. It is simply an inquiry or investigation into the manner and cause of death of an individual.

The Inquest is conducted by Dr. Cooper, the Coroner, with a court reporter and six jurors present. Two alternate jurors are also selected and will be present. The jurors are citizens of Lake County, the County in which the death occurred.

The purpose of the Inquest is to present pertinent information concerning the victim's death for the jury to arrive at a cause and manner of death. The cause of death may have already been determined from available medical evidence, including toxicology and autopsy results. Upon completion of the testimony, the Coroner's Jury will deliberate in private. They may request additional testimony, evidence, or conference, as they deem necessary. When the jury has concluded their deliberation, they will issue a verdict through the Foreman as to the cause and manner of death. The real responsibility of the jury is to establish the manner of death. The manner of death is a legal "category" required by law. The manner may be: Natural, Homicide, Suicide, Accident, or Undetermined.

The Coroner will summon to the Inquest those individuals who have pertinent information concerning the incident. This often includes, but is not limited to, the person who found the deceased, witnesses to the incident, those involved, police officers and investigators, and, in some cases, a direct relative. Reports such as Autopsy, Toxicology, Accident Investigation Reports and diagrams may be presented at the time.

All information and testimony at the Inquest is recorded and/or transcribed verbatim in the Inquest transcript. The testimony presented at the Inquest is sworn and under oath.



**What is an Autopsy?**

An autopsy is a surgical procedure that consists of an internal and external examination of the body and is used to aid the Coroner in establishing a cause of death, in those cases where the cause cannot be established with a reasonable degree of certainty, without an autopsy or mandated by State Statute.

An autopsy is performed by a licensed forensic pathologist who has been licensed by the State of Illinois.

**Does the family need to consent to an autopsy before the Coroner may authorize that one be performed?**

No. The Coroner may order an autopsy to be performed in any case deemed necessary. In matters of death investigation, the Coroner has absolute and complete authority and unlimited powers to investigate, make chemical analysis of body tissues, subpoena, and make arrests .

	2017	2018	2019
<b>Autopsies Performed</b>	280	363	396





## Fatality Management

Fatality Management is defined as, “the ability to coordinate with other organizations (e.g., law enforcement, healthcare, emergency management, and medical examiner/coroner) to ensure the recovery, handling, identification, transportation, tracking, storage, and disposal of human remains and personal effects in a timely, safe, and respectful manner while reasonably accommodating religious cultural and societal expectations; certify cause of death; and facilitate access to mental/behavioral health services to the family members, responders, and survivors of an incident.”

Mass fatality incidents are defined as those in which there are more bodies than can be handled and examined using local resources. Since communities vary in size and resources, there is no minimum number of fatalities for an event to be considered a mass fatality incident. When planning for and responding to mass fatality events, it is the responsibility of healthcare and fatality management professionals to ensure the respectful and orderly management of deceased persons.

Continuity of Operations planning (COOP) is a federal initiative to encourage departments to plan to address how critical operations will continue under a broad range of circumstances. A COOP plan addresses emergencies from an all-hazards approach and establishes policy and guidance ensuring that critical functions continue, and that personnel and resources are relocated to an alternate facility in case of emergencies. The COOP plan develops procedures for alerting, notifying, activating and deploying employees, identify critical business functions, establish an alternate facility, roster personnel with authority and knowledge of functions.

In 2019, the Lake County Coroner's Office was faced with several incidents that required the activation of COOP and Fatality Management Plans. Starting out the year in January, a plan of action was initiated for the evacuation of fifteen decedents from the County morgue to a temporary alternate morgue storage site. Shortly thereafter, in May, another unexpected and unfortunate event of an explosion, took four lives and required the activation of our Mass Fatality Plan (MFP) to utilize local resources in the search and recovery operations for three of the four victims.





## The Day our Morgue Broke Down

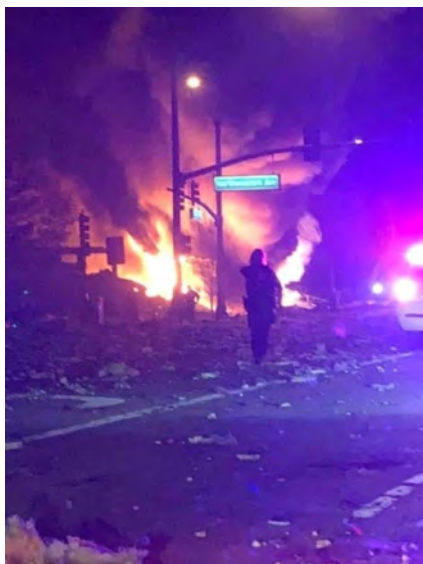
On Friday, January 11, 2019 at approximately 11:15 AM, the Lake County Coroner's Office morgue became inoperable requiring the safe and dignified evacuation of fifteen decedents to a temporary alternative morgue storage site. At the onset of this three- day operation, The Lake County Coroner's Office was in contact with the County Emergency Operations Center and was provided guidance in obtaining alternative storage. At 2:30 PM, The Lake County Coroner's Office was able to secure a refrigerated trailer through Sherman Hospital, Elgin. Coroner Dr. Cooper was in communication with Waukegan Mayor Cunningham and Waukegan Police Chief Walles advising of the use of the alley and the situation at hand. Dr. Cooper transported the trailer from Elgin, arriving at the Lake County Coroner's Office at 4:45 PM. Available Incident Morgue Operations staff included Dr. Cooper, five Deputy Coroner Investigators, one Administrative Assistant, and one Toxicologist. This operation involved securing the trailer for use onsite, creating a safety plan for the transferring of the decedents, and activating our decedent management plan. Fifteen decedents were secured in the alternative storage trailer by 7:30 PM Friday night. The county morgue was repaired within 32 hours which allowed the continued use of weekend morgue operations during the weekend snowstorm. By 10:00 AM, Monday January 14, all fifteen decedents were transferred back into the morgue without incident. After minor repairs of the rack systems, The Lake County Emergency Operation Center provided transport of the trailer back to Elgin, ending our Emergency Morgue Operations on Wednesday, January 16<sup>th</sup>.





## **Explosion Requiring a Mass Fatality Search, Recovery, and Reunification Operations Response**

On Friday, May 3, 2019, at 9:37 PM, AB Specialty Silicones, LLC, located at 3790 Sunset, Waukegan, was engulfed in flames, as a result of an explosion with devastating effects. According to news media interviews with witnesses, the blast could be felt throughout the county and beyond. There were multiple injuries requiring medical care and one victim was transported to a trauma hospital. He later succumbed to his injuries from the explosion. On Saturday, May 4<sup>th</sup> at approximately 2:19 AM, Coroner Dr. Cooper was notified by Waukegan Fire Chief Bridges of three employees who were unaccounted for. At approximately 2:45 AM, members of the Waukegan Fire Department located the remains of one of the three missing victims. Dr. Cooper activated a scene assessment team comprised of Dr. Cooper, Chief Deputy Patt and the two On-Call Deputy Coroner Investigators, Commander Mayer and Sergeant Carroll. The Lake County Coroner's Office Assessment Team was on location by 3:30 AM and at approximately 4:38 AM, the LCCO assessment team was briefed on scene safety concerns and the victim recovery operations in the already established Unified Incident Command Operations Center with members of the Hazmat Team, EPA, Waukegan Technical Response Team and Lake County Emergency Operations Manager.



At approximately 5:00 AM, Dr. Cooper and a Deputy Coroner Investigator met with multiple family members who were staged outside at a local business, in their parking lot. Dr. Cooper's primary responsibility during a mass fatality incident is recovering and identifying remains, for reunification to the families, in a timely manner. Victim identification information was obtained from the families of the missing victims and recorded on a Victim Site Missing Person Identification Form. Information collected for identification consists of type of jewelry worn, if any, body tattoos or piercings, last known dentist, last known physician, surgeries, known bone fractures or scars, last known clothing worn, type of shoes, etc.





## Explosion Requiring a Mass Fatality Search, Recovery, and Reunification Operations Response



Remains were recovered on the morning of May 4<sup>th</sup> and positively identified using dental record comparison on the evening of May 6<sup>th</sup>.

Partial remains were recovered on the afternoon of May 4<sup>th</sup> and May 7<sup>th</sup> with a continued search through May 9<sup>th</sup> and positively identified using DNA and dental record comparison on May 24<sup>th</sup>.

Remains were recovered on the afternoon of May 5<sup>th</sup> and positively identified on scene visually and by unique tattoos on the evening of May 5<sup>th</sup>.





## Explosion Requiring a Mass Fatality Search, Recovery, and Reunification

On May 5<sup>th</sup> Coroner Dr. Cooper, Chief Deputy Patt, and nine available LCCO staff members rapidly assessed and confidently adjusted to changing conditions to the scope of the scene. The LCCO staff worked as a team to accomplish the recovery process through availability, communication and continued to work in a professional and dignified manner with available resources and jointly with on-site construction crews and the owner of AB Specialty Silicones, LLC. A joint search and recovery team was established of members of the Waukegan Fire Department, Waukegan Technical Response Team, Waukegan Police Department., Multi-Agency cadaver search K-9's and their handlers. Site preservation and search and recovery equipment was provided by Naval Criminal Investigative Services (NCIS), Waukegan Fire Department, Waukegan Park District, and a construction company. Food vendor provisions on site and for continued LCCO Operations staff was provided by Dr. Cooper, Chick-Fil-A, McDonalds, Mission BBQ, and hydration was donated by several Lake County citizens.

The unified search and recovery joint operations ended at noon on Thursday, May 9<sup>th</sup>. In office operations continued with victim identification, cleaning and releasing of salvaged personal property, and continued communication with the victim's families.

Throughout the search and recovery operation, the LCCO team located and salvaged personal items of all three recovered victims and belongings of some of the surviving employees of the AB Specialty Silicones, LLC Plant. With much emotion and care, the LCCO staff took pride in cleaning and preparing these items for release and on Friday, May 10, LCCO turned over two boxes of salvaged personal items to the families of the victims and surviving employees. Some of these items included a motorcycle helmet, wallet, sets of keys, a favorite hat, a box of gloves with one of the victim's name written on it, framed certificates, a sentimental pair of engraved wooden shoes, a family photo book, and an employee's favorite utility knife holder.

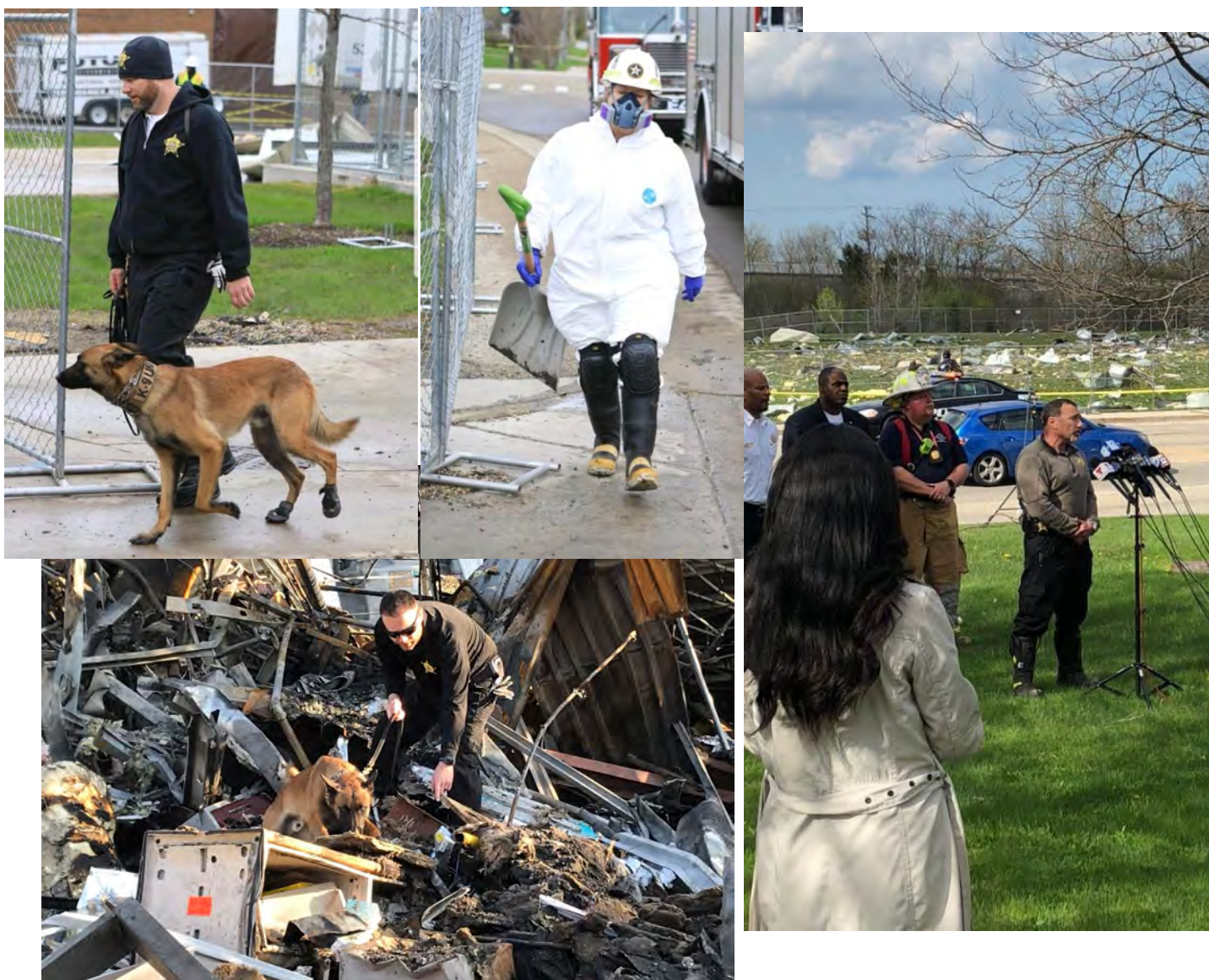






## Explosion Requiring a Mass Fatality Search, Recovery, and Reunification Operations Response

The Lake County Coroner's Office has prepared for Mass Fatality Incident operations through Fatality Management & National Incident Management System (NIMS) training through participating in table-top and full-scale exercises with local jurisdictions and involvement with national and local disaster response teams. Continuous fatality management preparations had proven to be beneficial, as the LCCO team was focused and mentally and physically prepared for the scope of this operation. The COOP was established for the continuation of normal daily office operations utilizing a minimum staff of two in the office to assist with autopsies, daily case load and death reports, morgue operations of intake and release of decedents, and administration duties.





1/1/2019 – 12/31/2019 LCCO OFFICE ACTIVITIES							
DEATH CALLS REPORTED TO LCCO							
TOTAL DEATH REPORTS				RELEASED TO MEDICAL		ACCEPTED CORONER CASES	
5084				4572		512	
CORONER CASE MANNERS OF DEATH							
HOMICIDE	SUICIDE	ACCIDENT	NATURAL	INDETERMI-NATE	UNDETERMINED		
33	65	196	211	1	6		
CORONER CASE CAUSES OF DEATH							
NEUROLOGIC	CARDIAC	PULMONARY	KIDNEY	LIVER	GASTRO	CANCER	OTHER CAUSES
12	129	14	2	17	5	8	24
ASPHYXIA DEATHS	DROWNING DEATHS	DRUG-ALCOHOL/ POISON	FIRE RE- LATED DEATHS	FIREARM RELATED DEATHS	FALL RE- LATED DEATHS	VEHICLE RELATED DEATHS	OTHER CAUSES
36	7	94	3	28	40	55	38
TOXICOLOGY REPORT STATS							
CORONER CASES- TOXICOLOGY TESTING				URINE DROP TOXICOLO- GY TESTING (Non-Coroner Cases)		TOTAL NUMBER OF TESTS RUN FOR IN-HOUSE TOXICOLOGY TESTING	
381				3029		6820	
AUTOPSY CASES							
FULL (Signed by Pathologist)		EXTERNAL (Medical Record Review Signed by Pathologist)		LIMITED (Signed by Pathologist)		TOXICOLOGY ONLY (Deputy Ex- ternal with Toxicology Report)	
317		56		23		26	
CORONER CASE DEMOGRAPHICS							
AGE	0-10	11-17	18-25	26-44	45-64	65+	UNK
	9	11	37	114	172	168	1
RACE	WHITE		BLACK	HISPANIC	ASIAN	OTHER	
	373		73	53	11	2	
SEX			FEMALE	MALE	Unknown		
			183	328	1		





## 2019 Accidental Deaths (Non-MVA or Drugs)

In 2019, the Lake County Coroner's Office investigated 66 accidental deaths.  
(Not motor vehicle or drug related)

Sex	
Female	30
Male	36

Type	
Drowning	9
Fall	39
Choking/Asphyxia	9
Other	9

Month of Occurrence	
January	3
February	5
March	8
April	6
May	8
June	10
July	7
August	2
September	4
October	3
November	6
December	4

Incident Location	
Antioch	1
Barrington	3
Deerfield	1
Fox Lake	1
Gages Lake	1
Grayslake	2
Hawthorn Woods	1
Highland Park	1
Island Lake	2
Lake Bluff	1
Lake Forest	2
Lake Zurich	3
Libertyville	4
Lincolnshire	4
Lindenhurst	1
Long Grove	1
Mundelein	2
Round Lake	1
Round Lake Beach	3
Round Lake Park	1
Vernon Hills	2
Wauconda	4
Waukegan	9
Winthrop Harbor	1
Zion	3
McHenry, Lake Co	1
Other (Non-Lake Co)	10

Age Range	0-10	11-20	21-30	31-40	41-50	51-60	61+
	1	2	3	3	4	7	46



## 2019 Homicide Deaths

In 2019, the Lake County Coroner's Office investigated a total of 33 homicide deaths.

Type	
Assault	1
Asphyxia	3
Motor Vehicle	19
Shooting	6
Stabbing	4

Race	
Black	12
Hispanic	8
White	13

Police Jurisdiction	
Fox Lake	1
Illinois State	1
Lake County	8
Lake Forest	1
North Chicago	3
Park City	2
Round Lake	1
Round Lake	2
Round Lake	1
Winthrop Har-	1
Wauconda	1
Waukegan	9
Zion	2

Sex	
Female	13
Male	20

Toxicology	
Positive	26
Negative	7

Month of Occurrence	
January	2
February	3
March	4
April	0
May	4
June	2
July	1
August	4
September	5
October	3
November	1
December	4

Age Range	0-10	11-20	21-30	31-40	41-50	51-60	61+
	1	7	7	4	4	4	6



## 2019 Infant Deaths

In 2019, the Lake County Coroner's Office investigated a total of 7 infant deaths. (Age 0-2 years)

Type	
Homicide	1
Undetermined	2
Accident	4

Sex	
Female	5
Male	2

Race	
Black	4
Hispanic	0
White	3

Age Range	
Less than 1 month	1
1 month	1
2 months	0
3 months	2
4 months	2
1 year	1

Month of Occurrence	
January	0
February	1
March	1
April	2
May	0
June	0
July	0
August	2
September	0
October	0
November	0
December	1

Police Jurisdiction	
Lake Zurich	1
Lake County Sheriff	1
North Chicago	1
Round Lake	1
Waukegan	3



## 2019 Motor Vehicle Deaths

In 2019, the Lake County Coroner's Office investigated a total of 55 motor vehicle deaths.

Sex	
Female	18
Male	37

Type	
Motor Vehicle	36
Pedestrian	11
Motorcycle	5
Train	3

Month of Occurrence	
January	2
February	4
March	7
April	2
May	4
June	6
July	4
August	5
September	7
October	6
November	2
December	6

Race	
Indian	1
Black	10
Hispanic	13
White	31

Toxicology	
Positive	36
Negative	19

Time	
AM	26
PM	29

Incident Location								
Antioch	1			Ingleside	2		Wauconda	2
Barrington	2			Lake Forest	1		Waukegan	11
Fox Lake	1			Lakemoor	1		Wheeling	1
Fox River Grove	1			Libertyville	4		Woodstock	1
Freemont Twp.	2			McHenry	3		Zion	3
Grayslake	2			North Chicago	2			
Gurnee	3			Ringwood	1			
Hawthorn Woods	1			Round Lake	4			
Highland Park	3			Vernon Hills	1			
Highwood	1			Wadsworth	1			

Age Range	0-9	10-19	20-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60+
	0	9	15	5	5	9	12





## 2019 Natural Deaths

In 2019, the Lake County Coroner's Office investigated a total of 211 natural deaths.

Sex	
Female	82
Male	129

Race	
Asian	6
Black	25
White	173
Other	7

Natural Cause	
Neurologic	12
Genitourinary	0
Cardiac	129
Kidney	2
Pulmonary	14
Liver	17
Gastrointestinal	5
Cancer	8
Other	24

Age Range	
0-10	1
11-20	4
21-30	3
31-40	15
41-50	20
51-60	46
61-70	50
71-80	39
81-90	22
91-100	11
100+	0



## 2019 Suicide Deaths

In 2019, the Lake County Coroner's Office investigated a total of 65 suicide deaths.

Sex	
Female	21
Male	44

Toxicology	
Positive	37
Negative	23
Not Tested	5

Police Jurisdiction	
Antioch	5
Buffalo Grove	1
Deerfield	1
Fox Lake	2
Grayslake	3
Gurnee	9
Highland Park	1
Highwood	1
Lake Forest	2
Lake Zurich	1
Lakemoor	1
Lincolnshire	2
Lindenhurst	1
Mundelein	1
North Chicago	2
Round Lake Beach	2
Round Lake	1
Round Lake	2
Tower Lakes	1
Vernon Hills	1
Wauconda	1
Waukegan	6
Zion	1
Lake Co Sheriff	17

Race	
Asian	1
Black	3
Hispanic	4
White	57

Month of Occurrence	
January	3
February	5
March	11
April	3
May	7
June	4
July	8
August	5
September	8
October	6
November	3
December	2

Type	
Firearm	20
Hanging	24
Drugs/Poison	10
Jump/Fall	1
Motor Vehicle	2
Stab/Cut	3
Other	5

Age Range	0-10	11-17	18-25	26-44	45-64	65+
	0	3	6	14	31	11



## 2019 Undetermined Deaths

In 2019, the Lake County Coroner's Office investigated a total of 6 undetermined deaths.

Sex	
Female	3
Male	3

Race	
Black	1
Hispanic	1
White	4

Toxicology	
Positive	2
Negative	3
Not Tested	1

Month of Occurrence	
January	0
February	1
March	0
April	1
May	0
June	1
July	0
August	1
September	0
October	2
November	0
December	0

Police Jurisdiction	
Gurnee	1
Island Lake	1
Lake Zurich	1
Mundelein	1
Waukegan	2

Age Range	0-10	11-17	18-25	26-44	45-64	65+
	2	0	0	2	1	1



## 2019 Drug-Related Deaths

In 2019, the Lake County Coroner's Office investigated a total of 94 drug-related deaths.

Sex	
Female	24
Male	70

Manner of Death	
Accident	87
Suicide	7
Homicide	0

Time of Occurrence	
AM	38
PM	56

Race	
Asian	0
Black	22
Hispanic	9
White	63

Incident Location	
Residence	66
Other Residence	13
Hospital	0
Outside	4
Hotel/Motel	4
Business	3
Treatment Center/ Shelter	3
Unknown	1

Known Cases where Naloxone was Used	
Overdose Cases	26
Natural Cases	3
Accident/Suicide (other than OD death)	5
Homicide	1
Undetermined	1

Death Location	
Residence	51
Other Residence	8
Hospital	24
Outside	4
Hotel/Motel	3
Business	1
Treatment Center/ Shelter	3

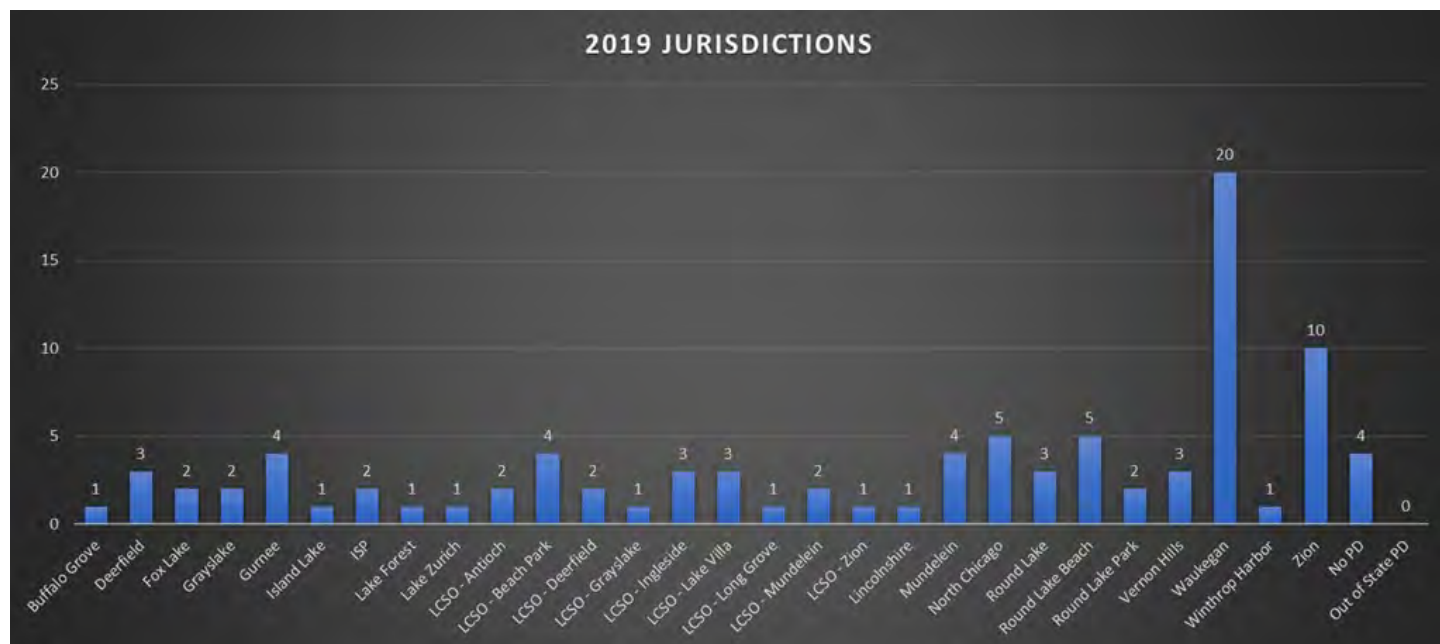
Age Range	0-19	20-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60+
	1	19	26	27	12	9





## 2019 Drug Deaths By Jurisdiction

Incident Location	
Buffalo Grove	1
Deerfield	3
Fox Lake	2
Grayslake	2
Gurnee	4
Island Lake	1
ISP	2
Lake Forest	1
Lake Zurich	1
Lincolnshire	1
Mundelein	4
LCSO Antioch	2
LCSO Beach Park	4
LCSO Deerfield	2
LCSO Grayslake	1
LCSO Ingleside	3
LCSO Lake Villa	3
LCSO Long Grove	1
LCSO Mundelein	2
LCSO Zion	1
North Chicago	5
Round Lake	3
Round Lake Beach	5
Round Lake Park	2
Vernon Hills	3
Waukegan	20
Winthrop Harbor	1
Zion	10
No PD	4
Out of State PD	0





## 2019 Drug-Related Deaths by Drug(s)

Fentanyl - 9

Fentanyl + Opiates - 3

Fentanyl + Heroin - 11

Fentanyl + Cocaine - 7

Fentanyl + Cocaine + Non-Opiates - 2 / Fentanyl + Cocaine + Opiates - 1

Fentanyl + Opiates - 3 / Fentanyl + Non-Opiates - 4 / Fentanyl + Opiates + Non-Opiates - 2

Fentanyl + Heroin + Cocaine - 3

Fentanyl + Heroin + Cocaine + Opiates - 1 / Fentanyl + Heroin + Cocaine + Non-Opiates - 2

Fentanyl + Heroin + Cocaine + Opiates + Non-Opiates - 1

Fentanyl + Heroin + Opiates + Non-Opiates - 1 / Fentanyl + Heroin + Non-Opiates - 9

Heroin - 3

Heroin + Cocaine - 3

Heroin + Non-Opiates - 2

Cocaine - 5

Cocaine + Opiates - 1 / Cocaine + Non-Opiates - 2

Opiates - 3 / Non-Opiates - 7 / Opiates + Non-Opiates - 9

**Total = 94**

**Alcohol was a direct result of death in 22 of the cases listed above.**



## Lake County Coroner's Office Toxicology Laboratory

The Lake County Coroner's office is the only Coroner's office in the state of Illinois with an in-house toxicology lab. The lab performs work on blood and urine samples collected at autopsy and tests for common drugs of abuse, along with blood alcohol content (BAC). The lab can test and produce results for casework in under an hour, for streamlined case decision making.

In addition to testing Coroner case toxicology samples, the toxicology lab also cooperatively works with other agencies within Lake County Government, and agencies in surrounding Lake County areas. Within Lake County Government, the Toxicology lab does all confirmatory testing for the Community Based Corrections programs through the Lake County Sheriff's Office and all the confirmatory testing for Adult Probation, Juvenile Probation, and Pre-trial departments in the 19<sup>th</sup> Judicial Circuit Court. Within the surrounding communities, the lab works with Oxford Houses, Moore Houses, The City of Waukegan, along with various other in and out of state probation departments to drug test their clients.

### Coroner Toxicology Cases Tested

2016	2017	2018	2019
370	371	393	381

### Outside Agency Urine Drops Tested

2016	2017	2018	2019
3347	3574	3064	3029

### Total Number of Tests Run in Coroner Lab (Many samples require multiple tests.)

2016	2017	2018	2019
6108	7229	6384	6820





## Gift of Hope

Gift of Hope is the organ and tissue donor network that operates in Lake County. Gift of Hope's mission is "To save and enhance the lives of as many people as possible through organ and tissue donation." The Lake County Coroner's Office continued their close partnership with Gift of Hope throughout 2019.

Fourteen Organ Donors had 46 life-saving organs transplanted and 126 Tissue Donors had 1,644 tissues procured for life enhancing surgeries in 2019. Because of our partnership, these life-saving and life enhancing gifts are possible.

The Lake County Coroner's Office continues to work with Gift of Hope for the chance to turn Lake County's tragedies into opportunities to save and improve lives.

"I would like to thank you and your entire department for going above and beyond to partner with Gift of Hope, even on the questionable Coroner cases, knowing we can assist with preserving evidence for convictions if necessary.

Also, I would like to thank you for starting to refer the SOS cases; Sudden deaths, On-scene and Suicides to Gift of Hope to offer tissue donation to the Lake County families of these decedents. The attached report shows that in 2019 you made 1 referral to Gift of Hope, however in the first 4 months of 2020 you made 9! This is amazing since I just educated you on this program in December of 2019.

Once again, thank you and your entire team for being life-saving partners with Gift of Hope and I am looking forward to all of our amazing work together in the years to come."

**-Gift of Hope Supervisor of External Relations**





**Gift of Hope Statistics**

<b>Hospital</b>	<b>All Calls</b>	<b>Hospital Deaths</b>
Vista Medical Center East—Waukegan	380	345
Northshore Highland Park Hospital—Highland Park	254	249
Northwestern Medicine Lake Forest Hospital	165	121
Advocate Condell Medical Center—Libertyville	749	713
Advocate Good Shepherd Hospital—Barrington	188	166
Lake County Coroner—Waukegan	0	0
<b>Totals</b>	<b>1736</b>	<b>1594</b>

**ORGANS**

<b>Hospital</b>	<b>Referrals</b>	<b>Donors</b>	<b>DBD</b>	<b>DCD</b>	<b>Total # of Organs Transplanted</b>	<b>ME/ Coroner Refusals</b>
Vista Medical Center East—Waukegan	74	5	5	0	12	0
Northshore Highland Park Hospital—Highland Park	31	2	0	2	1	0
Northwestern Medicine Lake Forest Hospital	8	0	0	0	0	0
Advocate Condell Medical Center—Libertyville	108	5	4	1	26	0
Advocate Good Shepherd Hospital—Barrington	34	2	2	0	7	0
Lake County Coroner—Waukegan	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Totals</b>	<b>255</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>0</b>



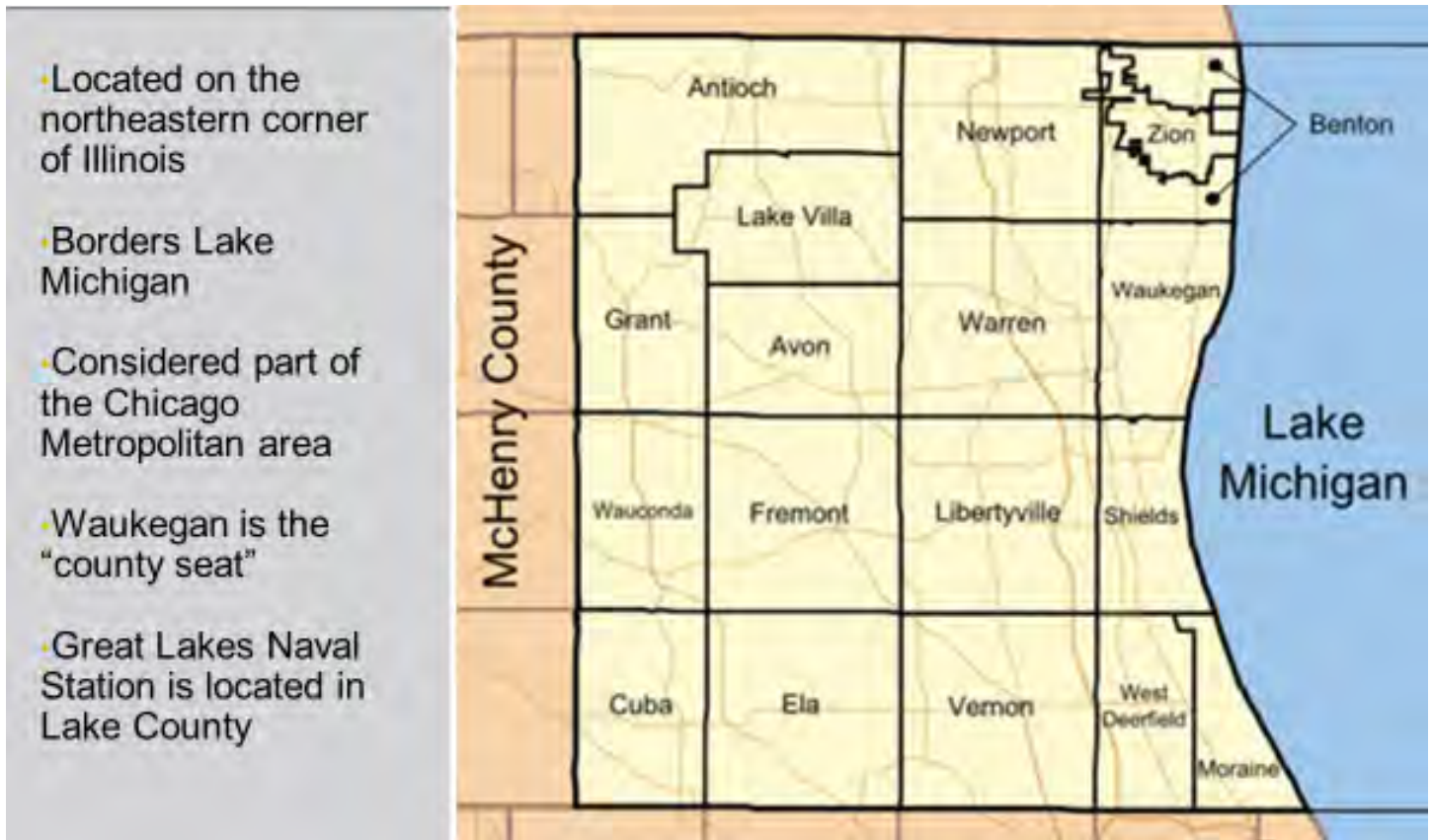
**Gift of Hope Statistics**

**TISSUE**

<b>Hospital</b>	<b>Referrals</b>	<b>Donors</b>	<b>Total # of Procured Tissues</b>	<b>ME/ Coroner Refusals</b>
Vista Medical Center East—Waukegan	143	27	383	4
Northshore Highland Park Hospital—Highland Park	62	14	187	1
Northwestern Medicine Lake Forest Hospital	40	10	134	1
Advocate Condell Medical Center—Libertyville	257	60	740	7
Advocate Good Shepherd Hospital—Barrington	57	15	200	1
Lake County Coroner—Waukegan	1	0	0	0
<b>Totals</b>	<b>560</b>	<b>126</b>	<b>1644</b>	<b>14</b>



## Information about Lake County, Illinois



## Total Population

**703,462**

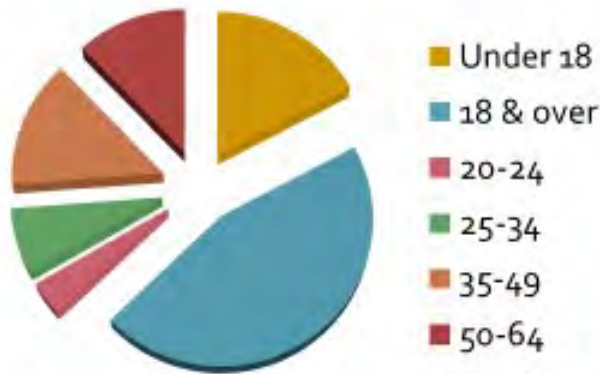
\*2010 U.S. Census Bureau





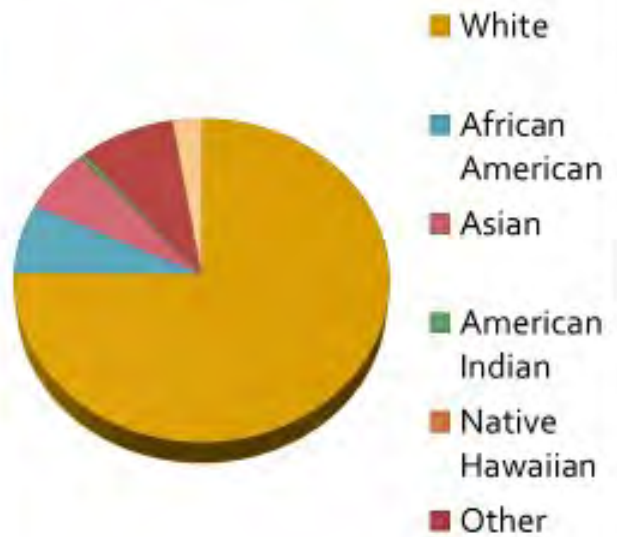
## Information about Lake County, Illinois

### Population by Age



\*2010 U.S. Census Bureau

### Population by Race



\*2010 U.S. Census Bureau



## Throughout the Year







## Throughout the Year





# 2019 Lake County Coroner's Office Annual Report





# 2019 Lake County Coroner's Office Annual Report





# 2019 Lake County Coroner's Office Annual Report

