

March 2009.....Highlights of some interesting cases handled by Wisconsin's death investigators this month.

- In Sheboygan County, a 19-year-old man was convicted on all charges related to an accident last summer that killed a 16-year-old girl walking down a county road. Those charges were hit and run resulting in death, homicide by intoxicated use of a motor vehicle and homicide by intoxicated use of a motor vehicle while having a prohibited alcohol concentration.
- In Racine County, divers recovered a vehicle from a river about a mile upstream from where its owner was found dead the day before. The cause of death was drowning. The driver had been last seen several days earlier, leaving a tavern in the early-morning hours.
- In Eau Claire County, the driver of an August crash in which two others died reached a plea agreement. The driver had been charged with two counts of homicide by intoxicated use of a vehicle and two counts of homicide by negligent operation of a vehicle.
- In Dodge County, a 65-year-old man was found dead near a tavern dumpster. The man's body may have been there several days before it was found. Foul play was not suspected.
- In Sheboygan County, a 30-year-old man died after being shot several times in the chest by an acquaintance. The incident occurred on a city street.
- In Wausau, a state appeals court refused to reconsider the only life sentence without parole given in Wisconsin to someone who was 14 when he committed a crime. The killer, who is now 25, was convicted of first-degree intentional homicide in the September 1998 death of a 13-year-old boy in Green Bay. The killer reportedly knocked the youth off his bicycle, chased him to the top of a five-story hospital parking ramp, beat him and threw him off the ramp to the ground. According to court records, 18 states have children who committed crimes when they were 14 or younger and were sentenced to life imprisonment without a chance for parole.
- In Milwaukee County, police were reviewing an apparent accidental shooting death of a 49-year-old man in a Milwaukee weapons plant. Police had responded to a 911 call made almost 8 hours earlier, but found nothing. Authorities feel the decedent made the call after accidentally shooting himself, then bled to death. Less than a year ago, another employee became the victim of a homicide at the same plant when he was pushed off a stairway by another worker, causing a harness the decedent was wearing to become tangled around his throat.
- In Marinette County, a 38-year-old man was convicted on three counts of first-degree intentional homicide in the shooting deaths last summer of three teenagers at a swimming spot along the Wisconsin-Michigan border. The man told investigators he felt no remorse, as if "he'd spilled some milk."
- In Milwaukee County, a 15-year-old girl died of a drug overdose while attending a party at a Whitefish Bay residence. The boy who may have sold the girl drugs then sought help from his father, who helped his son move the girl's body to a driveway at another location; the girl was still alive at that time. Another person

then moved her inside the residence, where she died. Several people have been charged in the case.

- In Winnebago County, a 15-year-old girl who was a patient at the Winnebago Mental Health Institute, died after choking on food in January 2006. Her parents recently filed a wrongful death lawsuit against the Department of Health and several employees of WMHI. The child had been diagnosed with several psychiatric conditions and developmental disabilities, including a swallowing disorder.
- In Waukesha, a 38-year-old man was shot in the face and killed by a man who then tried to escape on a city bus. Police arrested the man after stopping the bus a few blocks away from the site of the shooting.
- In Outagamie County, an autopsy showed a 48-year-old inmate died of a myocardial infarction after complaining of chest pains and being taken to an Appleton hospital.
- In Brown County, a 19-year-old man was shot and killed by masked intruders who broke into his home. Police found drug paraphernalia and drugs in the home.
- In Manitowoc County, a 79-year-old woman on her way to Mass died after being struck by a piece of snow removal equipment in a church driveway. The woman, a mother of 16 children, apparently had slipped and fallen before being struck. The operator of the equipment who struck the woman was her son-in-law.
- In Milwaukee County, police were investigating the death of a 6-day-old infant who was found dead on a couch by her mother, who also lost a second infant (age of two months) in a co-sleeping death less than a year ago. Investigators also found out that a half-sister of the dead infants died at the age of five-months-old in 1993. The mother reportedly told police varying accounts of events leading to the child's death in the most recent case. All of the deaths were attributed to unsafe sleep practices.
- In Sauk County, a 22-month-old Amish boy was killed when a horse reared up, causing a buggy to tip over. The child was ejected from the buggy, which then landed on top of him.
- In Black River Falls, a 16-year-old male was believed to be the author of a letter which threatened a mass shooting at the high school. On March 9, two-thirds of the students stayed home from school, in response to the rumored shooting plan.
- In Eau Claire County, a 26-year-old man was found guilty of first-degree intentional homicide after fatally stabbing another man during an argument at a stop light last summer. The two men were in stopped at the light, when an argument ensued and the stabbing then happened.
- In Marathon County, a 28-year-old man was charge with substantial battery after he "smacked" his 43-year-old girlfriend in the face after she kicked him in the mouth during an argument. The woman later died.
- In Marathon County, a convicted cocaine dealer with four previous drunken driving convictions will serve 15 years in prison for causing a fatal crash that was captured on police video. The 29-year-old woman was the driver of a truck that crashed into a van, killing a 34-year-old man last December.
- In Marinette County, a 39-year-old man was charged with drunken driving after being involved in a January crash that killed five members of a family after their

vehicle pulled out in front of the 39-year-old's truck on a highway. Two of the dead girls were found to be pregnant at the time.

- In Eau Claire County, the semi-truck driver involved in a 2005 crash that killed 5 and injured 28 faces additional federal charges of falsifying his driver's log. The bus was carrying a high school marching band that was returning from a competition when it slammed into the semi, which had overturned on Hy. 94.
- In Milwaukee County, a 26-year-old woman was charged with child neglect after her 3-month-old baby girl died of a methadone overdose. Investigators believe the mother put the methadone in the child's formula.
- A 21-year-old male snowboarder died after he was severely injured doing a backflip at the Trollhaugen Ski Area in Dresser, WI. He was airlifted to a St. Paul, MN hospital, where he died of his injuries.
- In Milwaukee County, a 38-year-old man was shot and killed at his business; his family told the media they thought the death was "over money." A 30-year-old man, reportedly a former employee, was arrested regarding the shooting.
- In Dunn County, authorities asked residents to "look for pieces of clear Plexiglass or other debris from the plane, as well as remains of any large bird" after a January plane crash that killed 3. It was hoped that the melting snow may reveal evidence as to why the plane went down, although icing is a possibility.
- The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources reported that "70% of snowmobilers killed this season had been drinking;" and that speed was a factor in 74% of fatal snowmobile accidents. 23 snowmobilers were killed this season, down two from last season. The average for the past decade is 28 fatalities each winter.
- A 33-year-old Madison woman who drove her friend away from a fatal drunken-driving crash, then refused to answer her door for an hour when police arrived, will spend four months in jail. She also was sentenced to 3 years probation for harboring a felon. Her 29-year-old friend was driving another vehicle that crashed into a farm field, killing a 26-year-old passenger. The crash happened in February 2008.
- In Marathon County, a one-year-old female died of injuries sustained when a van driven by her mother failed to stop for a red light and was struck by a Metro Ride bus. Police reported they believe the child who died was properly restrained in the vehicle.
- In Appleton, the Valley Funeral Home sustained significant damage in a fire during the early-morning hours of March 25.
- In Shawano County, an 8-year-old boy drowned at the Shawano Recreation Center during a Cub Scout outing.
- In Columbia County, a 51-year-old man was arrested in the beating, strangling and stabbing death of an 18-year-old woman which occurred in her Columbus home in 1980. Her 3-year-old son was asleep in the residence at the time and was not harmed.
- In Dane County, a 46-year-old man was arrested and charged with reckless homicide in the alleged beating death of a 37-year-old man which occurred in a Madison park. The police complaint reports the alleged killer told a friend he "did a tap dance" on the deceased man. The incident occurred in November 2008.

- In Dane County, a 26-year-old man was convicted of homicide by drunken driving for a February 2008 head-on crash that killed a 52-year-old man. At the time of the accident, the convicted man had a blood alcohol content of 0.21%. He was free on bail for what would become his fourth drunken-driving conviction; this was his fifth.
- In Brown County, a jury found a 46-year-old woman guilty of four homicide charges involving a June 2008 crash that killed two 18-year-old women. The woman, who was ruled to be intoxicated, reportedly was driving her Porsche at 80 mph on an Ashwaubenon street when she ran a red light and broadsided a vehicle the women were in. The convicted woman claimed her foot pushed down on the accelerator when she leaned over to pick up her dog.
- In Juneau County, authorities are offering a \$25,000 reward for new information regarding the killing of a 30-year-old woman 20 years ago. Her decomposing body was found by a hunter in a wooded area in rural Lafayette County about a month after she was reported missing.
- In Washington County, two children and one adult were killed in a two-vehicle collision on icy roads. Those killed were en route to a church function when their vehicle was struck by a flat-bed truck that went out of control. Three men in the other vehicle were arrested on suspicion of being in the country illegally.
- In Iowa County, two people were killed when their vehicles collided in a head-on crash, also on icy roads.
- In Milwaukee County, an 80-year-old male pedestrian was killed by a 44-year-old woman who reportedly had been drinking intoxicants prior to the accident. The woman ran a stop sign, then hit the man.
- In Milwaukee County, a student at UW-Milwaukee was found dead in a dorm room on campus. News reports say the student was drinking and had Suboxone in his system.
- The Wisconsin DOT reported that traffic deaths continued to fall in 2009; and 2008 had the fewest number of fatalities in 64 years. Through the first three months of this year, deaths from traffic crashes are nearly 20 percent below last year's pace, and are continuing a pace where deaths in 16 of the last 17 months were lower than the same month the year before. So far in 2009, Wisconsin has had 92 deaths in 81 crashes, compared with 113 deaths in 108 crashes for the first three months of 2008. There were 27 highway deaths in 2008, including 64 drivers, five motorcycle drivers, 21 passengers and two pedestrians. Since October 2007, every month but August 2008 was lower than the previous year.

And in a follow up in the Minnesota case reported last month, all charges against former professional wrestler Verne Gagne have been dropped. Gagne, 82, who suffers from Alzheimer's disease and is in an assisted-living facility, reportedly body-slammed another male resident, 97, fracturing his hip. The man died a few weeks later.