



The Examiner

<http://www.wcmea.com>

Winter 2013

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



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Happy Holidays all,

2013 has been a very busy year for our profession, and it looks like 2014 will likely be another year of challenges and positive change. The new online death certificate program, although a work in progress, appears to have been a success story for most of us. As we continue to work with our partners at the state, I think that the effort at the state level and by the individual coroners and medical examiners offices will make this a great success. It is already much better than some of the stories I have heard from other states that have undertaken similar efforts. We are seeing a great improvement to what our surviving families get for death certificates, especially in amended cases. The online access is saving our area funeral homes some legwork as well. The state is making improvements to the system regularly and they should be congratulated on the level of customer service they have provided as well as the product that they have provided.

The proposed changes to 979 are also a topic in several counties. The legislative committee has been working hard to share information. The effort to amend 979 has been going on for years and thanks to the efforts and hard work of the many who have been involved I think we are closer than we have ever been to moving the legislation forward. There is still much to do, and it is important that we remain united in this effort. We are a dedicated profession, how many professionals do you know that have worked so hard to impose mandates on themselves?

I have sent out the most recent language that is moving forward. We have some friendly amendments to the legislation to resolve some concerns with language. I will try to get the information regarding those changes out soon. This proposed bill is probably the single most important and impactful piece of legislation for our profession in decades.

At many of the conferences I have heard coroner and medical examiner leaders share their stories about the challenges they face at death scenes and during their investigations as they deal with their respective law enforcement partners. In part, this is our own fault. We are one of only five states that doesn't require any training for death investigators.

That is embarrassing to me and should be concerning to the communities we serve. In my former life I was a police officer, and I can tell you that in some areas of the state, coroners and lay medical examiners have a tremendous amount of history to overcome.

As most know, or should know, there are efforts by many inside and outside our profession to make sweeping, nation wide changes to the coroner medical examiner system. I think it is imperative that we take these steps to improve our system or it will probably be done for us.

If you have questions about the legislation please take the chance to talk to any of the members of the legislative committee. If you know of someone who has questions please encourage them to do the same. It is critical that we all stay informed. As I said in my email after the fall conference we have discovered some communication problems in our Association. The WCMEA board is working to make communication better inside the Association. Having said that, this bill affects those outside the WCMEA as well, and we need information to get to all of our peers. The WCMEA has made a large investment in this legislation, and this could very well be our last chance for success.

The Legislative Committee is made up of Scott Rifleman, Dr. Doug Kelley, Al Klimek, PJ Schoebel, and me. Please make the commitment to stay informed. If you aren't getting information, reach out to a Board member and we will work to get you in the loop.

We do a very difficult job, under less than desirable circumstances. We also have the privilege of representing the dead, helping survivors, and providing answers to those families at what can be the worst time in their lives. Please take the time to take care of yourselves and those you work with.

Enjoy the holidays and stay safe.

-Barry

Statewide Vital Records Information System Status Update

With the help of the Wisconsin Coroners and Medical Examiners Association and many other partners, the State Vital Records Office successfully implemented the death module of the Statewide Vital Records Information System (SVRIS) on September 3. SVRIS has automated the registration of death records, amendment requests and death certificate issuance in Wisconsin.



SVRIS has been very well received by both coroners/medical examiners and funeral directors. Most participants in the death registration process now are active SVRIS users. Over 99 percent of all death records registered since the SVRIS implementation have been filed electronically. Of these, approximately 25 have been filed as fully electronic records for which both the funeral home and medical certifier have used SVRIS to file the record. The remaining 74 percent of death records were filed using the fax attestation process to obtain the medical certification (cause of death). Since September 3, the State Vital Records Office has received less than 1 percent of death records filed using the paper Death Certificate Worksheet. This small percentage primarily comprises records for which families are acting as the funeral director.

As expected with the implementation of a new system, the Wisconsin Help Desk received a high volume of calls in the initial weeks. Within the first three weeks of implementation, 1,200 calls were received and responded to. Both call volume and wait times for returned calls have now declined significantly. If you have any questions regarding any process in SVRIS, please do not hesitate to call or e-mail the Wisconsin Help Desk at 1-866-335-2180 or helpdesk@wi.gov. Your call will be returned by staff from the State Vital Records Office.

While there are always opportunities for continuous improvement, we have made significant strides in streamlining the death record registration process in Wisconsin and look forward to an ongoing partnership with the Wisconsin Coroners and Medical Examiners Association.

Michelle Smith, Coding Technician for the State Vital Records Office

Rock County Coroner Resigns

Jenifer Keach, Rock County Coroner, resigned from office November 16, 2013 to pursue an opportunity to continue her career in nursing.

Keach was appointed Coroner in June 2005 by then Governor Jim Doyle and has remained in office for 8.5 years. During her tenure, Keach strived toward bringing integrity, professionalism, and respect back to the Coroner's Office.



Keach has implemented policies to establish service standards and provide accountability to the public, achieved national accreditation from the International Association of Coroners and Medical Examiners, and recently opened Rock County's own morgue cooler. Jenifer Keach has been an active member of the WCMEA and served on the board of directors in a variety of officer positions including that of President.

On behalf of the WCMEA, congratulations and best wishes to Jenifer Keach on her newest endeavors.

WCMEA Fall Conference and Annual Meeting

The 2013 Annual Training Conference was held in beautiful Manitowoc from October 14, 2013 through October 16, 2012. There were approximately 50 attendees who enjoyed presentations from local and national names from topics ranging from drowning deaths to NAMUS.



Andrea Zaferes (pictured left), Vice President of Life-guard Systems and Forensic Aquatic-Death Investigator, was the keynote speaker who highlighted homicidal drowning and water related deaths.

It was announced that the 2014 Spring Conference will be held April 7th through April 9th in Wausau. The 2014 Fall Conference and Annual Meeting will be hosted by LaCrosse County.

RTI sponsored a social event at the Wisconsin Maritime Museum that included a self-guided tour of the museum galleries as well as a submarine tour.

Many thanks to Barry Irmen, Dane County Director of Operations, for his hard work in making this conference a huge success. The WCMEA would also like to thank our host Manitowoc County, the Holiday Inn, as well as the many presenters, sponsors, and exhibitors for their time, hospitality and expertise.



The 2013-2014 WCMEA Board of Directors

2013 Marked the first year for the new election process and members had the opportunity to express their votes utilizing absentee ballots. Though there were a few snags along the way, elections overall went smoothly. The new officers were announced prior to the annual meeting on Tuesday, October 15, 2013. Congratulations are in order for the following members on their newly acquired positions:

- President:** Barry Irmen, Dane County
- 1st Vice President:** Jennifer Schroeter, Kenosha County
- 2nd Vice President:** Mary Ricci, Barron County
- Sergeant-at- Arms:** Amy DeMeter, Door County
- Treasurer:** Robert Kulhanek, Sheboygan County
- Secretary:** Laurie Parisey, Oconto County
- Member-at- Large:** Joe Morovitz, Crawford County
- 3-year Trustee:** Al Klimek, Oconto, Door and Brown Counties
- 2- year Trustee:** John Larson, Marathon County
- 1-year Trustee:** Jay Deppe, Jefferson County
- Past President:** PJ Schoebel, Dodge County

The Winner's Circle

The WCMEA awarded two \$600 training scholarships at the Annual WCMEA Banquet on Tuesday October 15, 2013. Each year scholarships are awarded to deserving WCMEA members for the purpose of receiving training in a program, course or seminar related to medicolegal death investigation. The 2013 scholarships were awarded to Margo Dorgay of Lincoln County and Allen Photopoulos of Barron County.

Influenza-Associated Pediatric Deaths

The Wisconsin Division of Public Health (DPH) is issuing this reminder to all coroners and medical examiners of the requirement to report cases of influenza-associated pediatric deaths.



Case Reporting:

Since 2004, influenza-associated pediatric deaths have been a nationally reportable condition. The Department of Health Services made influenza-associated pediatric deaths a mandatory reportable condition in Wisconsin, beginning March 1, 2008.

Case Definition:

- An influenza-associated death is defined for surveillance purposes as a death resulting from a clinically compatible illness that was confirmed to be influenza by an appropriate laboratory or rapid diagnostic test.
- There should be no period of complete recovery between the illness and death.
- Influenza-associated deaths in all persons aged <18 years should be reported to DPH or local public health agencies.

Laboratory Criteria for Diagnosis:

Laboratory testing for influenza infection may be done on pre- or post-mortem clinical specimens, and include identification of a positive influenza A or B virus infections by at least one of the following:

- Influenza virus isolation in tissue cell culture from respiratory specimens.
- Reverse-transcriptase polymerase chain reaction (RT-PCR) testing of respiratory specimens.
- Immunofluorescent antibody staining (direct or indirect) of respiratory specimens.
- Rapid influenza diagnostic testing of respiratory specimens.
- Immunohistochemical (IHC) staining for influenza viral antigens in respiratory tract tissue from autopsy specimens.
- Four-fold rise in influenza hemagglutination inhibition (HI) antibody titer in paired acute and convalescent sera. Serologic testing for influenza is available in a

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limited number of laboratories, and should only be considered as evidence of recent infection if a four-fold rise in influenza antibody titer is demonstrated in paired sera. Single serum samples are not interpretable.

DPH is also available for consultation on suspect cases and can assist with the collection and testing of specimens either at the Wisconsin State Laboratory of Hygiene or at the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and Prevention. DPH will be responsible for sending data to the CDC, and for assuring notification of local public health officials regarding data received from local healthcare providers, coroners and medical examiners. The influenza-associated pediatric death report form can be found online at <http://dhs.wisconsin.gov/communicable/resources/HlthProvider.htm>.

Questions and clarification of reporting mechanisms and case consultation should be referred to:

Thomas Haupt M.S.
 Research Scientist -Epidemiologist
 Wisconsin Division of Public Health
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New Medical Examiner Named

Marathon County has a new Medical Examiner! Jessica Blahnik-Will officially began her new post on Thursday, November 14, 2013.

Blahnik-Will has been with the department for three years, and has been the interim Medical Examiner since the retirement of John Larson in August.

Blahnik-Will has her Bachelor’s Degree in Nursing and is currently completing her Master’s Degree in Forensic Nursing with an emphasis in Death Investigation. When asked about her goals for the future of the Marathon County Medical Examiner’s Office, Blahnik-Will states that she plans “to continue the great working relationships with other department agencies, develop collaborations between different departments and agencies . . . and develop preventative programs throughout the community to reduce the number of preventable deaths.”



Congratulations to Jessica Blahnik-Will on her new position.

Training Opportunities

Spring WCMEA Conference
 Wausau, Venue TBA
 April 7-9, 2014

 Annual WAHI Training Seminar
 April 22-25, 2014
 Radisson Paper Valley, Appleton

Medicolegal Death Investigator Training Course
 January 27–January 31, 2014 at St. Louis, Missouri
 Www.medschool.slu.edu/mldi

 Free Online Forensic Training
 National Institute of Justice
 Www.nij.gov/training

Interesting Deaths in Wisconsin.....

- In **Trempealeau County**- a man was killed after he crashed his all-terrain vehicle. He was riding the ATV in west-central Wisconsin with a group of riders. The group returned to a farm after the ride to discover that one rider was not with them. Authorities say riders who went back looking for the man found him lying on the ground next to his ATV. It is believed the man lost control while negotiating a curve.
- In **Shawano County**- A 35-year old man who had been sought by police was killed following a head-on crash along State 29. Menasha Police had been searching for the man and his SUV in connection with an earlier domestic disturbance. Witnesses told Shawano County deputies that the black SUV passed an eastbound semi at a high rate of speed on State 29 approximately 2 minutes before the crash. The man turned off the headlights prior to heading westbound into the path of the semi. The SUV started on fire and burned until it was extinguished by the fire department. The man was pronounced at the scene. The driver of the semi suffered only minor injuries.
- In **Dane County**- A 40-year old man died in an apartment fire. Police and paramedics were called to the 100 block of Morraine View Drive after getting reports of an unconscious man.
- In **Milwaukee County**- A 25-year old man was shot to death while driving on Milwaukee's north side. The man was headed north on 20th Street when he was shot shortly before 11 a.m. The vehicle continued northbound until it struck a tree.
- In **Marinette County**- A 69-year old Mount Pleasant man was on his way back from a summer home in Michigan when he died in an early morning crash. The man was traveling southbound on Hwy 41 in the Town of Grover when his vehicle left the roadway and rolled over. The man was ejected from his vehicle and later pronounced dead at the scene.
- In **Oconto County**- A 34-year old man was killed in a one-car accident in Abrams. The man was driving left southbound US 141 when he hit a sign. The man was transported to a Green Bay hospital where he later died. The passenger in the car suffered non-life-threatening injuries.
- In **Monroe County**- A Sparta police officer shot and killed a 21-year old man who threatened his family with a knife. The state Division of Criminal Investigation is investigating.
- In **Dane County**- A 30-year old man was shot and killed in his Fish Hatchery Road Apartment. Several people who live in the apartment, including the man's young child, were home at the time of the shooting. Authorities reported that the shooting was a targeted act of violence. A motive for the shooting has not yet been identified; however, it followed a disturbance.
- In **Fond du Lac County**- A 77-year old man was killed in a two-vehicle crash. The man had been driving a motorcycle when he crossed the center line, striking a car. The man was pronounced dead at the scene. The driver of the car had been transported to a local hospital for non-life threatening injuries.
- In **Dane County**- A 5-year old boy died three days after authorities launched an abuse investigation. The investigation began when an ambulance was called to the home and the boy had been found in "life-threatening condition." The death remains under investigation.

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- In **Kenosha County**- A three-month old infant girl died at her residence after sleeping in bed with a 15-month old sibling and both parents. The cause and manner of death remaining pending.
- In **Racine County**- Two semis were stopped on Interstate 94 when a series of vehicles crashed into them from behind, ending in a 7-car pileup and the death of a Wisconsin man. The man, 70-years old, was the front-seat passenger in a Toyota Camry with his 60-year old sister. The man's sister was transported to a local hospital for non-life-threatening injuries. The pair was driving to Sturtevant to visit a relative when the crash occurred.
- In **Jackson County**- A 57-year old man was shot and killed by his 20-year old son. The young man followed his father outside and began shooting him- first in the hand, then in the back, and twice in the head. He then dragged his father's body behind a tractor to a gravel section of driveway where he covered the body with a blanket, doused it with gasoline, and burned it before burying it in an all-terrain vehicle track on the property. A family member had reported the victim missing after not hearing from him in more than a week. An extensive manhunt began. The victim's body was recovered and underwent an autopsy. The 20-year old son is charged with first-degree intentional homicide, hiding a corpse, and operating a vehicle without the owner's consent.
- In **Pierce County**- Two children have died and 3 other people were injured in a collision between a truck and SUV. A 12-year old girl in the SUV died at the scene of the crash, and a 5-year old girl was pronounced at the hospital. The driver of the SUV and 2 other passengers were taken to Regions Hospital in St. Paul Minnesota for treatment of injuries. The 3 people in the truck were uninjured. Road conditions were not a factor in the crash.
- In **Kenosha County**- A 33-year old woman was found dead following a standoff. The standoff began when officers were called to a residence for a report of a possible shooting. The Kenosha County Tactical Team arrived and began hours of negotiations. When those negotiations were unsuccessful, the tactical team forced its way into the house where officers took the man into custody and found the woman deceased. The death remains under investigation.
- In **Outagamie County**- A 25-year old man died in an Appleton nightclub shooting. The man was shot in the head with a handgun at Luna Lounge, a downtown Appleton nightclub. He was taken by ambulance to a local hospital where he later died. Police said that they consider the shooting to be an isolated incident where the victim was singled out.
- In **Fond du Lac County**- A woman has been charged with First Degree Intentional Homicide and Hiding a Corpse in the death of her husband. The woman admitted to shooting her husband and dumping his body in Milwaukee. She also admitted to methodically disposing of evidence including the body, weapon, and various other items involved in the incident in several spread out locations. Investigators say that the woman reported her husband missing 4 days after he was shot. The body was found on Thanksgiving Day in a Milwaukee neighborhood on the city's far northwest side.
- In **Milwaukee County**- A 38-year old man died after a garage collapsed. The man was a contractor who had been working with another contractor on a garage rehabilitation job when the structure collapsed, trapping the man inside. Firefighters pulled the contractor from the garage upon their arrival, but the man was pronounced dead at the scene. The other contractor was outside of the garage at the time of the collapse and unharmed.

Patrice Hall & Jennifer Schroeter
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This poem was shared by Kenosha County Deputy Medical Examiner Jim Huff. It comes from Retired [OSP Trooper Bob Welsh](#), who tells a beautiful story we can all appreciate this holiday season http://www.youtube.com/embed/WxjZB5S_g7s?rel=0.

My Christmas Eve-

Bob Welsh

The hours late, should go to bed
 Near midnight I believe
 But memories keep me wide awake
 This snowy Christmas Eve

Yes, memories of my kids moved on
 Each has their separate life
 And how the holidays have changed
 Since angels took my wife

The toys, the food, the
 Christmas cheer
 My wife would bear the load
 Because I work most holidays
 State Trooper on the road

Just sitting in my easy chair
 So many years retired
 I reminisce of times gone by
 And all that has transpired

Of all the many happenings
 That seem to come to light
 A multitude of them occurred
 Right on this very night

A drunken woman in a wreck
 Died on Christmas eve
 Leaves memories of a tragic case
 Most people won't believe

I had to drive to where she lived
 To tell her next of kin
 And found the rundown mobile home
 She had been living in

The person answering the door
 I still recall today
 A little girl about four years old
 She said "I'm Sue McKay"

I asked her if her dad was home
 And felt the longest pause
 She said "My daddy ran away"
 "You must be Santa Claus"

"My mommy said you'd come tonight"
 "If I just stayed in bed"
 "And bring a pretty doll for me"
 "That's what my mommy said"

I broke the law that Christmas Eve
 Did not call child's care
 They'd merely put her in a room
 And that I could not bear

I picked her up and took her home
 My wife tucked her in bed
 And wrapped a pretty doll for her
 Just like her mommy said

Adopted by a loving home
 And soon they moved away
 I won't forget that Christmas Eve
 And little Sue McKay

Another bitter Christmas Eve
 A blizzard to behold
 Had left a family in a ditch
 Just trapped there in the cold

By grace of God I spotted them
 All cold and gaunt with fright
 I drove them to a motel room
 To safely spend the night

One Christmas Eve a homeless man
 Shivering and wet
 Was trying hard to get a ride
 I'm sure he'd never get

I picked him up and drove him
 To a diner on the hill
 To warm his bones I left him with
 a five dollar bill

Strange how when your all alone
 What memories you recall
 Your think of everything you've done
 And was it worth it all

I think about my God, my job
 My children and my wife
 Would I do it all the same
 Could I re-live my life

Then comes a knock upon my door
 This late who could it be
 A neighbor or has Santa Claus
 Come to visit me

The figure standing in the cold
 Gives me a sudden fright
 A trooper with that solemn look
 Dear God, who has died tonight

I'm flashing back to bygone years
 How I'd often stood
 On someone's porch to bring them news
 And it was never good

Is this how life gets back at me
 For misery I've induced
 Where pain I've caused some other folks
 Has now come home to roost

But looking in the troopers eyes
 My mind is in a whirl
 I see a pleasant countenance
 The trooper is a girl

She reached and smiled to shake my
 hand
 And silence wasn't broke
 Until a tear rolled down her cheek
 And then she softly spoke

"I'm sure you don't remember me"
 "But thought I'd stop and say"
 "God bless you on this Christmas Eve"
 "I'm Trooper Sue McKay"