



# The Examiner

<http://www.wcmea.com>

Summer 2009

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## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Dear WCMEA Members,

As I sit here at my computer writing to you, I find myself thinking about the changes that have taken place in my own life over the past four years. Some have been good, and opened up exciting new opportunities. Some, like the closing of our local GM factory, have been beyond my control and I can only help my family plan for the future. I don't know what my life will look like in another four years, but I can plan and prepare in the hopes of a brighter tomorrow.

The field of medicolegal death investigation (MLDI) and our Association also face a changing future. The National Academy of Sciences issued a report this year that included a recommendation to make major changes in the national death investigation system. Part of that recommendation included "replacing and eventually eliminating existing coroner systems". The report also notes the "shortage of resources and lack of consistent educational and training requirements" and the need for improvements in accreditation and adherence to standards. Regardless of your feelings about the qualifications of coroners vs. medical examiners or the politics of the National Association of Medical Examiners, the NAS report heralds major change for us all and we must prepare for it.

For those of us dependent on a county budget, the situation on the ground is grim. The state budget shortfall has required counties to cut costs, and coroner and medical examiner offices have historically been poorly budgeted to begin with. We will be asked to make do with less, and money for training will be an easy target for the budget chopping block. Since we also face some belt tightening at home, out-of-pocket MLDI training dollars will be hard to come by. How do we meet our needs for professional training and maintain standards in our offices?

As most of you know, the WCMEA has been promoting legislation to revise s.979 which defines our duties and responsibilities as medicolegal death investigators. The bill also proposes the creation of a Board on Medicolegal Investigations to establish training and testing requirements for coroners and medical examiners. The WCMEA has been working proactively to identify and meet the training needs of our members. We have of-

fered opportunities at two conferences for members to take the ABMDI certification examination. We awarded two \$600 training scholarships at our June conference. Recent conferences have focused on a variety of topics and hands-on training labs to help our members learn new skills and sharpen competencies. Our website has grown to include resources and educational material. The board of directors and the education committee are exploring options for affordable computer-based training programs for our members, which could lay the groundwork for mandatory training in the future.

I believe that coroners and medical examiners are professionals who perform a unique and valuable service to our citizens. As president, I will continue to promote education for our members because I believe that training and certification is the pathway to the professional recognition we deserve. We face a future in our profession that is rife with change and opportunity. Some of us will rise to the challenge and therefore be prepared when the MLDI system in Wisconsin changes. Some will retire rather than conform to a new system with new expectations. Each of us must do what we can to promote our profession and prepare our offices for the future. The WCMEA is our collective voice in that effort. Together we can create opportunity in the face of the changes to come.

Jenifer Keach, Rock County Coroner



## June Conference Update

Approximately 59 attendees were present at the 2009 Annual June Training Conference held in Eau Claire. Conference-goers were treated to presentations from local and national names on topics ranging from cultural and religious issues in relation to death and autopsy, to fatal crash reporting and budgetary information.

Dr. Mary Dudley, Chief Medical Examiner for Jackson County in Missouri, was the keynote speaker and led the conference by highlighting the roles and responsibilities of coroners and medical examiners. A copy of her book, "Forensic Medical Investigation," was given as a door prize at the membership banquet.

News from the state Vital Records office . . . a switch to electronic filing of death certificates is in progress. The new filing system will be available to coroners and medical examiners in early 2011. All counties will receive information regarding the electronic filing system and corresponding training opportunities.

Handouts from many of the presenters as well as other exciting information from the conference will be available on the WCMEA website for your review.

Past-President, Dr. P. Douglas Kelley from Fond du Lac County, addressed the membership at the annual meeting. He expressed his gratitude and praise to the WCMEA board of directors for their hard work and accomplishments. Dr. Kelley also informed the membership of big plans for the future of the association. The WCMEA bylaws and voting procedures will be revamped and there is talk of creating a new executive secretary position. Such a position in other professional organizations has helped these organizations/associations grow and become more successful. Dr. Kelley briefly explained that this new position would be assigned by the board of directors, but be the primary contact person for the association, and conduct business on its behalf.

It was announced that the 2010 Winter Conference will be held January 3-6, 2010 at the Lodge at Cedar Creek in Wausau. The Summer Conference will be hosted by Columbia County and held in Wisconsin Dells from June 6-9, 2010. Looking ahead to 2011, Door County will host the Summer Conference . . . Please stay tuned for more details!

Many thanks to Jenifer Keach, Rock County Coroner and WCMEA President, for her hard work in making this conference a success. The WCMEA would also like to thank our host Chippewa County, the Sleep Inn Suites & Conference Center, as well as the many presenters, sponsors, and exhibitors for their time, hospitality and expertise.



WCMEA President, Jenifer Keach, poses for a quick photo with keynote speaker, Dr. Mary Dudley and our WCMEA Webmaster, Marc Playman



Pictured above: Chippewa County Sheriff Kowalczyk and Coroner Kate Gerrits



Faye Aschenbach



Vicky Goeden-Hoch

The WCMEA would like to extend congratulations to the 2009 training scholarship winners!! A scholarship of \$600.00 was awarded to both Faye Aschenbach of Mantiwoc County and Vicky Goeden-Hoch of Fond du Lac County at the June Conference.



## Additional Congratulations Are In Order

On Tuesday, June 9, 2009, the Membership Meeting and Election was held.

Congratulations to the following members on their newly elected office:

President: Jenifer Keach (Rock County)

1<sup>st</sup> Vice President: Angela Hinze (Columbia County)

2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President: Lou Brady (Juneau County)

Secretary: Jon Hagen (Outagamie County)

Treasurer: Robert Kulhanek (Sheboygan County)

Sergeant-at-Arms: P.J. Schoebel (Dodge County)

Member-at-Large: Richard Schleifer (Clark County)

3-year Trustee: Al Klimek (Brown, Door, Oconto Counties)

2-year Trustee: Traci England (Oneida County)

1-year Trustee: Mike Jesse (Shawano County)

Past-President: Dr. P. Douglas Kelley (Fond du Lac County)

The WCMEA Board of Directors (from left to right): Jon Hagen, Jenifer Keach, Al Klimek (back), Lou Brady, Dr. P. Doug Kelley, Richard Schleifer, Angela Hinze, and Robert Kulhanek.



## The Honeymooners!!



Congratulations and Best Wishes to newlyweds Bonnie Kindschy and Ramon Kohnert. Bonnie is the Trempeleau County Coroner and Ramon her long-time deputy. After 18 years of courtship, this happy couple recently tied the knot and spent their honeymoon at the Annual June Training Conference.



Newlyweds Ramon Kohnert and Bonnie Kindschy exchange a kiss.

"Two lives, two hearts joined together in friendship united forever in love."

- Anonymous

## *June 2009 Wisconsin Updates.....some interesting cases handled by Wisconsin's death investigators*

- In Portage County, two men were arrested for delivery of prescription medications after another man was found dead in a motel room.
- In Sheboygan County, a 48-year-old man died when he crashed his race car during a SCAA-sanctioned Chicago Region June Sprints event at Road America.
- In Milwaukee County, a 21-year-old man was arrested, charged with killing a 77-year-old man during a robbery of a store than the man owned. Relatives of the man turned him in to authorities after finding candy they suspected he stole; the store owner reportedly "kept reaching for the gun" during the robbery; the man charged told the store owner "if he reached for the gun again, he would shoot him," according to published reports.
- In Dane County, an Iowa Boy Scout leader and a Boy Scout were killed after a dog jumped onto the lap of a man driving an SUV, which then crossed the center line and hit the motor home, driven by the Scout leader.
- In Chippewa County, two incoming senior students at Chippewa Falls High School died within a few days of each other. A 16-year-old student drowned in the Chippewa River, and a 17-year-old boy died in a house fire.
- In Waukesha County, a 56-year-old former physician entered no-contest pleas to three charges of homicide by intoxicated use of a vehicle in the deaths of a pregnant high school administrator and her 10-year-old daughter.
- In Price County, a citizens group launched a petition campaign to recall the sheriff; the group claims the sheriff mishandled the search for a 70-year-old woman who suffered from dementia; the woman died.
- In Dane County, a 38-year-old homeless man was found dead of natural causes on a bench on the Capitol square.
- The Office of Justice Assistance reported a 20% drop in Wisconsin homicides from 2007 (184) to 146 in 2008.
- In Milwaukee County, a 14-year-old girl died of swine flu after being hospitalized for respiratory distress about two weeks earlier.
- In Winnebago County, a 17-year-old male was found guilty of first-degree intentional homicide after he strangled his father, then put his body in the trunk of a car. The boy had claimed self-defense. The incident happened in October 2008.
- In Oneida County, a judge refused to dismiss a homicide charge against a man whose 10-month-old daughter died after ingesting a morphine tablet that had been left within her reach. The man's attorney claimed he was "overcharged" in the case.
- In Fond du Lac County, a 15-year-old girl died in a farm accident. Her 16-year-old brother was operating a skid steer and attempting to pull-start a tractor the girl was driving. Both implements overturned, pinning the girl underneath.
- In Sheboygan County, a 54-year-old woman died after complaining of chest pains and then collapsing near the end of a 400-yard swim course during the Elkhart Lake Triathlon. The death was attributed to drowning.
- In Milwaukee County, a 21-year-old woman was sentenced to 20 years in prison for helping a new boyfriend kidnap and kill a college student for his sports car. The man was stabbed to death last October. The alleged killer shot and killed himself as police approached his home.
- In La Crosse County, a 38-year-old woman faces up to 15 years in prison after her van fatally struck and killed a 55-year-old pedestrian on New Year's Eve. The woman "heard a noise" but claimed she didn't know she had struck the man, who was then run over by a following vehicle. An autopsy showed the first vehicle that hit him delivered the fatal injuries, as he was standing when his spine was fractured.
- In Dane County, two 16-year-old boys were charged with first-degree intentional homicide in the shooting death of a 17-year-old boy, who is the father of a 1-year-old son. He was shot in the back and died on the doorstep of a nearby townhouse.
- In Dane County, a 61-year-old highway worker died after being struck by a vehicle on Hwy. 151.
- In Chippewa County, a 45-year-old male died after his ultra light crashed.
- In Milwaukee County, a 24-year-old man died after being shot by a security guard during an attempted robbery of a check cashing business; a second robber was wounded. The guard was properly licensed to carry a gun on the job.
- In Door County, a husband, wife and his elderly mother died when their car pulled away from a stop sign and into the path of a tanker truck that was hauling milk.
- In Marinette County, a 47-year-old man fell from his canoe and drowned. His 7-year-old daughter, who was wearing a life vest, jumped into the water after him and was rescued.

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- In Jackson County, a Sheboygan chiropractor and his son died when their single-engine plane crashed in a remote area.
- In Milwaukee County, a 42-year-old woman was charged with fatally stabbing a 18-year-old girl.
- In Brown County, four people died after a vehicle drove the wrong way on Hwy. 41 and collided head-on with another vehicle. The driver of the vehicle heading the wrong way had just left the scene of another accident he was involved in; alcohol is suspected as being a factor in the crash.
- In Brown County, a man confined to a wheel chair died in a house fire.
- In Milwaukee County, a 23-year-old man was shot and killed in a drive-by shooting; the man's father was arrested for removing drugs from the clothing of his son as he lay on the street.
- In Lincoln County, a 31-year-old man was arrested after allegedly delivering heroin to a 29-year-old woman who died at a domestic abuse shelter.
- In Columbia County, a 46-year-old man was arrested in connection with the stabbing death of a 43-year-old man which occurred on the street in the business district of Pardeeville. Police reported the two argued over a woman.
- The Wisconsin State Journal reported that Wisconsin ranks 44<sup>th</sup> in seat belt usage in the United States, with only 74% buckling up. The national average is 83%.
- In Brown County, a driver involved in a hit-and-run crash which killed a motorcyclist and left his passenger with permanent brain injuries was sentenced to 11 years in prison. His blood alcohol level was found to be 0.124%.
- In Lincoln County, a 20-year-old woman was convicted of helping plot a robbery that led to the stabbing death of a 42-year-old woman in 2007.
- In Dane County, a 42-year-old man was sentenced to life plus 65 years in prison for killing a 37-year-old man and wounding the man's brother.
- In Dunn County, an 18-year-old man drowned while swimming in the Chippewa River.
- In Fond du Lac County, a 67-year-old woman was killed and her husband seriously injured when they were hit by a SUV while crossing a city street.
- In Marathon County, a judge refused to delay the reckless homicide trial of a father accused of praying instead of seeking medical help for his 11-year-old daughter, as she was dying of undiagnosed diabetes.
- In Forest County, a 19-year-old man drowned in McKinley Lake.
- In Milwaukee County, a couple who was arguing as they drove down U.S. 45 and then struck and killed a motorcyclist are facing homicide charges.
- In Taylor County, the body of a 46-year-old man was found in a pond on his property after an extensive search.
- In Sheboygan County, a 63-year-old man died after falling off a second-story porch. Police said the man had "been drinking heavily all day" before he fell.
- In Kenosha County, two teenage women died after their car rolled over and they both were ejected on a county highway.
- In Sheboygan County, a 14-year-old boy died when the tractor he was driving overturned. The tractor was pulling a hay wagon.
- In Columbia County, a 21-year-old man hanged himself at the Columbia Correctional Institute in Portage. He had a history of mental illness.
- In Beloit, two men who crashed their car into a street-light pole had been shot before the accident. A 30-year-old man died of his wounds, and a 24-year-old man was seriously injured.
- In Kenosha County, an 18-year-old man died of a viral illness that affected his heart, according to an autopsy. He starred on the Kenosha Bradford baseball team, leading to the 2008 WIAA State Tournament title. He was named to the first-team all-state squad, had earned a scholarship to play baseball at the University of Minnesota, but transferred to Carthage College during his freshman year.
- In Milwaukee County, a 78-year-old woman was killed while walking in a cross-walk after two vehicles collided and then one of the cars struck the woman.
- In Milwaukee County, a 47-year-old woman was found dead after her vehicle struck and killed a dog when her car veered off the street, onto the sidewalk and then hit a light pole.
- In Wood County, authorities ruled the boating-related death of a 52-year-old man was an accident. Investigators think the man slipped on the concrete boat-landing, striking his head and becoming unconscious. The death was ruling due to drowning.

*Continued on next page.....*

## Abusive Head Trauma Conference

The Abusive Head Trauma conference was held in Madison April 23 and 24, 2009. Nationally recognized experts provided excellent information involving the controversy over shaken baby syndrome while highlighting high profile cases both on a national and local level. Approximately 150 attendees were present ranging from law enforcement officials, physicians, prosecutors, social workers, as well as coroners and medical examiners.



Photograph by Jon Hagen

There was a strong showing of forensic pathologists and physicians at the Madison conference. Pictured above from left to right: Dr. Mark Witeck, Dr. William Perloff, Dr. Robert Huntington, Dr. Susan Venuti, Dr. Mary Case (presenter), Dr. Lynda Biedrzycki, and Dr. P. Douglas Kelley.

## Training Opportunities

The St. Louis University School of Medicine, has announced the following dates for their Medicolegal Death Investigator Training:

August 17 – 21, 2009

January 4–8, 2010

April 26–30, 2010

The course fee is \$825.

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### FORENSIC SCIENCE SEMINAR

Presented by The New Mexico Office of the Medical Investigator July 22, 2009, Albuquerque, NM. Contact: Yvonne Gomez, Program Coordinator 505-272-8894, FAX: 505-272-1245

[ygomez@salud.unm.edu](mailto:ygomez@salud.unm.edu)

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New York City's Office of the Chief Medical Examiner, has established a new Forensic Science Training Program funded by the National Institute of Justice. These are practitioner-orientated courses in the Medicolegal Investigation of Death. There is no cost to the participant. Call 212-323-1505

## WI Updates Continued...

- In Milwaukee County, a 28-year-old man was shot and killed outside a Milwaukee nightclub.
- In Trempealeau County, a man died in a house fire.
- In Waukesha County, a man killed his live-in girlfriend by repeatedly stabbing her with a large butcher knife.
- In Marathon County, a 21-year-old man convicted in the 2007 stabbing of an 18-year-old man at a party was sentenced to 28 years in prison.

## National Updates...abbreviated!

- On June 25, 2009, Farah Fawcett lost her battle with anal cancer. Later on that same day, pop-star Michael Jackson was found unresponsive at his residence. His autopsy results are pending.
- Billy Mays, television's Oxy Clean pitchman, was found deceased at his home.
- Ed McMahon, 86, died on June 23, 2009, in California.

## For your information...

Medtronic has issued a pacemaker recall, warning physicians about potential problems with the Kappa Series 600/700/900 and the Sigma Series 100/200/300. Those concerned can call 1-800-505-4636.

# A Plane Crash Investigation: One Perspective

While attending a past conference, one of the recurring topics of conversation I heard was in regard to the recent plane crashes that have occurred in our state. It seems that whenever there are high profile cases where extraordinary circumstances are involved, we find ourselves wondering if we would remember to cover all the bases, especially if our county has never investigated such a case. Since our county was one of three that experienced such a crash, we thought it might be helpful to other counties to share some of what we learned during our investigation.

As with all cases, the best approach is to keep your wits about you, and use common sense. Take a deep breath, and think about what you need to do differently. Whether the fatality is at the scene or not, get as much information as you can about the general circumstances of the incident before contacting outside agencies. A gentle reminder to law enforcement is to treat the site like a crime scene; utilizing logs, restricted access, and chain of custody protocol, can prevent a problem later.

When you've gathered the basics, then make contact with the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) regional office (numbers are listed below for your convenience) and get the name and telephone number of a contact person. The same is true of the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) since they are the ones who will be responding directly to the site. For most of the investigation, you will be in contact with one or both of these agencies either to share information or coordinate further areas of investigation. The more information you have at your disposal before you contact them, the more time and energy you will save in making multiple calls. The only exception to this rule is in the event that the crash involves a military aircraft, in which case many more rules are applicable and should be addressed in a separate article. Regardless of whether the fatality occurs at the crash site, if you have the staff available, you may want to assign one person to the body and one to the scene. The more documentation you can do on-site and in a timely fashion, the better it is for all agencies.

Scene safety and security, which should have taken place long before you were called, is one of those obvious things that can be taken for granted, and yet come back to make you wish you had done some things differently. For example, it never hurts to consider things like expanding the outer perimeter, especially if media arrive quickly or if the site is in a populated, accessible area. It is also useful to establish an inner perimeter limited to the plane and ground markings. Also, there are special considerations such as the type of fuel on board and the nature of the cargo, which makes HAZMAT issues a primary concern. In our case, one of the things learned in hindsight is that even though the pilot was transported and died at the hospital, it would have been better for his fuel-soaked clothes to be removed at the scene. This is because the nature of the fuel had not yet been identified, and he did have serious chemical burns which could have been avoided. In any case, removing the clothing as quickly as possible may avoid causing post mortem artifact that disguises other injury or evidence. Regardless, always save the clothes whether it seems pertinent to your investigation or not, as the FAA will likely ask for them. Also, be sure to have witness information available to pass on to the FAA.

As with any "vehicle crash," identification of the decedent is paramount. To expedite this, one of the first things you can do is to have someone at the scene get you the "N-number" from the plane, and then it can be entered into the FAA website for identification and registration. In our case, the plane ID numbers were called into a Deputy Coroner who started with the FAA website while our Coroner responded directly to the hospital. Shortly after the Coroner arrived at the hospital he knew most of what he needed to about the plane, including who it was registered to, the serial number, the make/model and the age. This enabled his Deputy Coroner to follow other Internet leads, which eventually assisted in identification of the decedent through a business ad for crop-dusting that had been posted on the web. (If the N-number is not visible, you can use the same process with the serial # or make/model.) Another useful piece of information for all agencies is a GPS reading at the site.

Provided that you have an intact body for autopsy, let there be no doubt that both the NTSB and the FAA will require one to be done. Also, be aware that the NTSB has a new requirement procedure for autopsy specimen collection, requiring a kit called the "TOX-BOX." **CAUTION: Do not proceed to autopsy without this.** The FAA representative should deliver one to your office prior to the scheduled autopsy, or to the morgue where the autopsy will be held. There are several pages of instructions as to which specimens need to be collected (there are 14 of them), and how they are to be packaged and processed. It's not that they are complicated, but they are very detail specific, time consuming, and require a multi-level chain of custody protocol including shipping requirements and instructions. Even though your pathologist may be familiar with the "TOX-BOX" specimen collection, you really need a separate representative from your office to cover all the additional processing details as they will take longer than 24 hours after the autopsy to complete.

One of the best things to remember in this type of case is that the NTSB is in charge of the entire crash scene investigative process, and the FAA will be the people on the ground at the scene, and most often the ones working face-to-face with your office. It is best to refer all media questions to the NTSB. However, you alone are in charge of the fatality, so work your case the way you always work it, but keep it mind you are part of a team that will also exert their needs and expectations into your area of expertise. All of the NTSB and FAA team members with whom we worked were great people, and we took advantage of their broad knowledge base. Overall, it was a positive inter-agency working environment, and a good reminder never to underestimate what we can continue to learn from one another when we are open to a multi-team approach.

## Reference numbers:

NTSB: Chicago Regional Office (630) 377-8177

FAA: Great Lakes Regional Operations Center (847) 294-8400

NTSB Brochure: [www.nts.gov/family/LEO\\_brochure.pdf](http://www.nts.gov/family/LEO_brochure.pdf)

FAA Aviation Identification Website: [www.registry.faa.gov/aircraftinquiry/](http://www.registry.faa.gov/aircraftinquiry/)

Submitted by Lou Brady

Juneau County Coroner's Office



*Patrice Plungis & Jennifer Schroeter*  
*Waukesha ME's Office*  
*515 W. Moreland Boulevard*  
*Waukesha, WI 53188*  
*(262) 548-7575*

## WE WANT YOU!!!

Have an interesting or unusual case to share? Know of a special person you would like to have highlighted in an upcoming issue of the Examiner? We want to hear about them! Please send us, your friendly editors, case information or personal profiles for consideration in the upcoming publications.



Entries can be sent to:

Patrice Plungis  
Deputy Medical Examiner  
Waukesha County ME Office  
515 W. Moreland Boulevard  
Waukesha, WI 53188  
(262) 896-8396

Jennifer Schroeter  
Deputy Medical Examiner  
Waukesha County ME Office  
515 W. Moreland Boulevard  
Waukesha, WI 53188  
(262) 548-7872