

APPENDIX D

SPECIAL REPORTS

- 1) Hypothermia Deaths**
- 2) Homeless Decedents**
- 3) Public Dispositions**



**OFFICE OF THE CHIEF MEDICAL EXAMINER
REPORT ON HYPOTHERMIA DEATHS IN DC (2005- March 2010)**

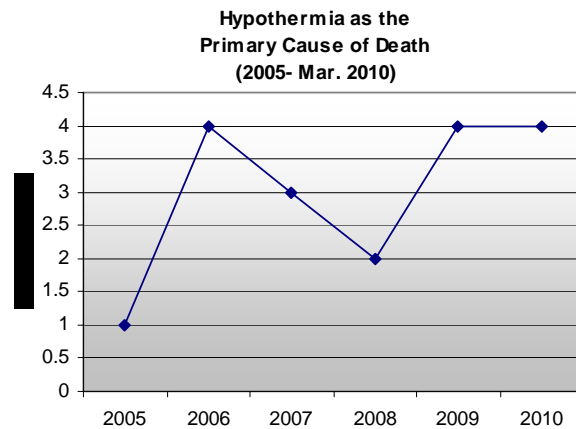
Overview of Hypothermia

According to Webster’s II New College Dictionary (2001), Hypothermia is defined as: Abnormally low body temperature. The Center for Disease Control (CDC)¹ further defines this condition as, a core body temperature of 95° Fahrenheit or less. The CDC also states that Hypothermia causes nearly 700 deaths in the United States annually.

This report will provide statistical data of Hypothermia related deaths reported to the District of Columbia Office of the Chief Medical Examiner (DC OCME) from calendar year 2005 through March of 2010.

Breakdown of Hypothermia Deaths

From calendar year 2005 through March 2010 there were 34 deaths that were associated with Hypothermia. Table 1 below illustrates that of these 34 deaths, 18 had a PRIMARY Cause of Death certified as Hypothermia, but 16 of these deaths had a CONTRIBUTING Cause of Death as either “Hypothermia” or “Cold Exposure.”



Year	Hypothermia Deaths (Primary Cause of Death)	Contributing "Cause of Death" Hypothermia or Cold Exposure	Total Deaths Associated with Hypothermia or Cold Exposure
2005	1	3	4
2006	4	3	7
2007	3	5	8
2008	2	1	3
2009	4	0	4
2010	4	4	8
TOTAL	18	16	34

Table 1: Breakdown of Hypothermia related Deaths by Year

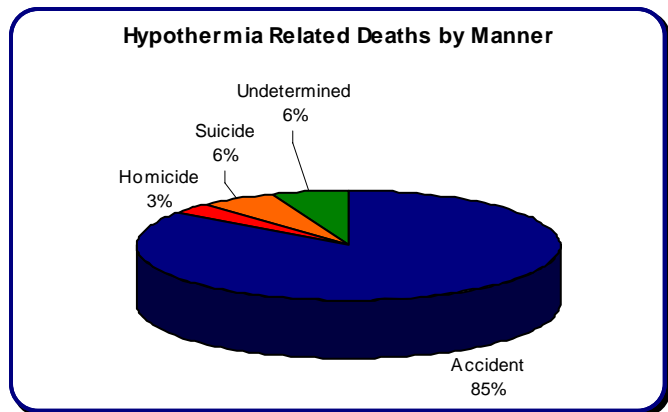
¹ Reference is from the CDC website located at: <http://www.cdc.gov/media/pressrel/fs050224.htm>

Manner of Death

The “Manner of Death” provides the way in which the death occurred. In the DC OCME there are seven classifications for Manner of Death and they are: Accident, Homicide, Natural, Pending, Stillbirth, Suicide and Undetermined.

In general Hypothermia Related Deaths are Accidental, and during these years of study 85% of all Hypothermia or Hypothermia/Cold Exposure related deaths reported to the OCME were certified with the Manner of Death as “Accident”. However, although there were 29 Hypothermia deaths certified as Accident, there

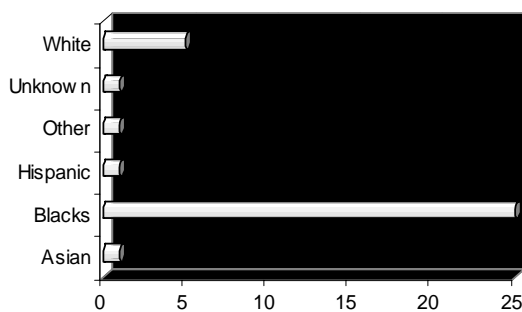
was also 1 Homicide in 2008 caused by Hypothermia due to Maternal neglect; 2 were Suicides in 2007 with a primary cause of death certified as drowning; and 2 were Undetermined deaths, one of which occurred in 2007 and one in 2006 – both of which were deaths caused by drowning also.



Demographic and Other Important Facts

Prevalent Months of Death: Over these six years there were more Hypothermia related deaths in the months of December (10) and February (8) than any other month.

Hypothermia Related Deaths by Race



Gender, Age and Race: During this six year time period there were eight female deaths, of which 5 or 63% had a “Primary” Cause of Death due to Hypothermia. Also, there were twenty-six male deaths, of which 13 or 50% had a “Primary” Cause of Death due to Hypothermia. Thirty-three of the 34 decedents were adults between the ages of 41 – 97 years old. One exception occurred in 2008 where the decedent was an infant.

The chart to the left titled “*Hypothermia Related Deaths by Race*”, illustrates that Blacks represented 74% of all Hypothermia related deaths from 2005 – March 2010.

Number of Undomiciled Decedents: Of the 34 decedents that died as a result of Hypothermia/Cold Exposure, nine were confirmed to be Homeless. Table 2 illustrates by calendar year, the number of decedents that was confirmed as homeless and died due to Hypothermia/Cold Exposure as a “Primary” cause of death or as a “Contributing Condition”.

Year	Undomiciled
2005	2
2006	1
2007	2
2008	0
2009	1
2010	3

Table 2: Undomiciled decedents by year





OFFICE OF THE CHIEF MEDICAL EXAMINER REPORT ON HOMELESS DEATHS IN DC (2009)

Overview of the “Homeless Population”

In an effort to determine and compare the population of the Homeless in the District of Columbia with the deaths known to the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner (OCME), it was alarming to find that nationally as quoted in an article by Donovan, Neil (April, 15, 2010, Changes.org) titled: “*Down for the Count: The U.S. Census Bureau's Failure to Count America's Homeless*”

It is unknown nearly how many homeless people live in the United States...

The U.S. Court of Appeals decided in 1996 ([case link](#)) that failure to count all the homeless was not a failure to perform a constitutional duty; the Constitution does not give individuals a right to be counted or a right to a perfectly accurate census.

The US Census Bureau confirms the above information for the 2000 census, and the Census Bureau’s full answer to the question of “*Does the Census Bureau produce data on the population experiencing homelessness?*” can be found at:

https://ask.census.gov/cgi-bin/askcensus.cfg/php/enduser/std_adp.php?p_faqid=316&p_created=1078412711&p_sid=ttLWjb8k&p_accessibility=0&p_redirect=&p_srch=1&p_lva=40&p_sp=cF9zcmNoPTEmcF9zb3J0X2J5PSZwX2dyaWRzb3J0PSZwX3Jvd19jbnQ9MjksMjkmcF9wcm9kcz0mcF9jYXRzPSZwX3B2PSZwX2N2PSZwX3BhZ2U9MSZwX3NIYXJjaF90ZXh0PUhvbWVzZXNzIHNOYXRpc3RpY3M!&p_li=&p_topview=1

However, for 2010 the Census Bureau reports¹ that the homeless will be counted using a method called Service-Based Enumeration (SBE). This method will use sources such as “Service-based locations,” which includes facilities such as emergency and transitional shelters for people experiencing homelessness, soup kitchens, regularly scheduled mobile food vans, and pre-identified non-sheltered outdoor locations. This information, once collected, will be very helpful for the OCME; because then we can make statistical comparisons based on the population.

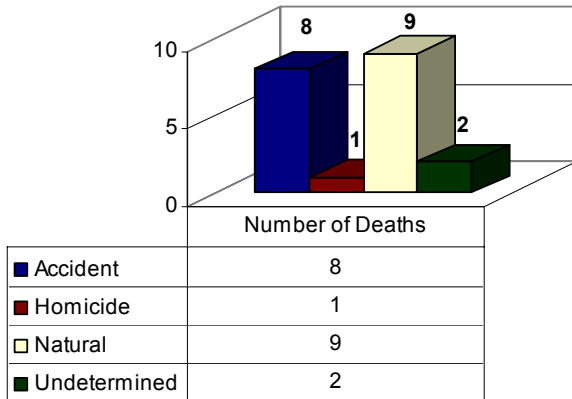
Summary of Findings for 2009 Homeless Deaths

During calendar year 2009, there were a total of twenty (20) deaths reported to the DC Office of the Chief Medical Examiner, where the decedents were confirmed to be homeless. The following page will provide a brief summary and breakdown by Manner of Death, Gender, Race, and Age.

¹Information obtain from the website: https://ask.census.gov/cgi-bin/askcensus.cfg/php/enduser/std_adp.php?p_faqid=7318&p_sid=ttLWjb8k&p_created=1218636603&p_sp=cF9zcmNoPSZwX3NvcnRfYnk9JnBFZ3JpZHNvcnQ9JnBfcm93X2NudD0mcF9wcm9kcz0mcF9jYXRzPSZwX3B2PSZwX2N2PSZwX3BhZ2U9MQ!!&p_search_text=Homeless

By Manner of Death

Homeless Deaths by Manner of Death

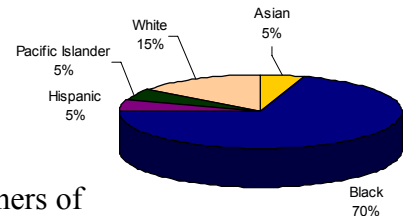


Note: The one Homicide was a Black female.

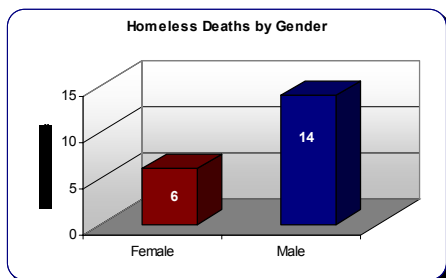
By Race and Gender

Fourteen of the decedents reported to OCME were Black/African American; three were White; one was Hispanic; one was Asian and one was Pacific Islander. Blacks represent 70% of this population.

Homeless Deaths by Race



Females: There is a total of six (6) female decedents, and the “Manners of Death” were as follows: three (3) were accidents, of which two (2) were drug overdoses; one (1) was a homicide; and two (2) were natural deaths. Three of the female decedents were Black/African American, two were White and one was Asian.



Males: There is a total of fourteen (14) male decedents, and the “Manners of Death” were as follows: five (5) were accidents, of which three (3) were drug overdoses; seven (7) were natural deaths; and two (2) are undetermined. Eleven of the male decedents were Black/African American, one was White, one was Hispanic, and one was Pacific Islander.

By Age: All decedents were between the age of 34 and 63 years old. The breakdown is as follows:

Age Group	# of Deaths
30-39	2
40-49	7
50-59	10
60 and Over	1
Total	20





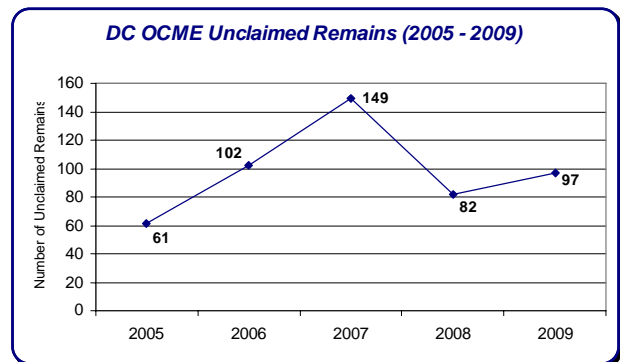
OFFICE OF THE CHIEF MEDICAL EXAMINER REPORT ON PUBLIC DISPOSITIONS (2005 – 2009)

Overview of the “Public Disposition Process”

All bodies examined at the OCME are stored by the agency until families make funeral arrangements. Usually this occurs in a matter of days. However a portion of the population remains “Unclaimed” or “Unidentified” and has to be disposed of by the agency. In addition, the OCME provides storage of remains for nursing homes and hospices that do not have refrigerated facilities to store bodies.

Unclaimed remains from hospitals are also by regulation to be stored and disposed of by OCME (DC Code §5-1411). The process for which unclaimed bodies are handled is called “Public Dispositions.” After a 30-day waiting period and after all efforts to locate family members are exhausted the OCME makes final arrangements for these bodies through contracts with local funeral homes. All Unclaimed bodies (whether Identified or Unidentified) are cremated through contracts with local funeral directors, unless there exists a concern for public health and safety that would require burial. Those unclaimed bodies identified as United States military veterans, once verified, are transported to Quantico for burial in the National Cemetery.

It is important to note that Public Dispositions are not an established process in Medical Examiner offices in neighboring jurisdictions. For example in Maryland, bodies are released to the Anatomic Board after 3 days if they are not claimed by the Next of kin.



Calendar Year	Unclaimed Remains	Buried or Cremated as Unidentified	Number of Public Dispositions Processed
2005	61	5	153*
2006	102	3	117*
2007	149	3	155*
2008	82	1	81*
2009	97	3	88*
Totals	491	15	594

*Some of these deaths processed may have occurred in the previous year(s).

Over these 5 years 97% of the decedents were identified thanks to the exemplary efforts of our Investigations staff and the Metropolitan Police Department.

