

ISLAND COUNTY CORONER'S OFFICE

101 6th Street Northeast • Coupeville WA 98239 Office

360-679-7358



Shantel M. Porter, D-ABMDI

Coroner

2023 ANNUAL REPORT

Let us not forget that every statistic documented within this report represents the loss of someone's loved one and a valued member of our community.

Establishment Of The Office

The Island County Coroner's Office was established with jurisdiction coextensive with the boundaries of Island County.

It shall be the duty of The Island County Coroner's Office to determine the cause and manner of any death reported as having been killed by violence; has suddenly died under such circumstances as to afford reasonable grounds to suspect or infer that death has been caused or occasioned by the act of another by criminal means; has committed suicide; and to determine the cause of all deaths as to which applicable state law provides for the coroner to take jurisdiction over remains (RCW 68.50.010)

The Island County Coroner's Office is currently staffed by one elected Coroner and one Chief Deputy Coroner. Forensic Pathologists are utilized on a contractual basis to perform autopsies and external examinations and one Autopsy Technician on a as needed basis. The office is committed to providing professional services to the community and all staff are dedicated to professionalism while maintaining a high degree of compassion, integrity, and thoroughness.

The Island County Coroner's Office responds to calls for death investigation 24 hours a day. As an overview of the office, when a call is received reporting a death and the death falls under the coroner's jurisdiction, the investigating coroner is dispatched to the location and conducts a medicolegal death investigation into the circumstances surrounding the death. The decedent is transported by the investigating coroner to the morgue facility where an autopsy or external examination is conducted to determine the cause and manner of death. The investigating coroner generates a preliminary report which is provided to the forensic pathologist prior to the autopsy/examination. If an autopsy is preformed, an autopsy report will be generated. The decedent is then released to the families chosen

funeral home.

Mission/Vision

Mission statement

The Island County Coroner's Office determines the cause and manner of reported deaths by conducting professional medicolegal death investigations while ensuring that everyone who has suffered a loss is treated with dignity, respect, and compassion.

Vision Statement

1. The Island County Coroner's Office is accessible to the public, media, and other elected officials.
2. The Island County Coroner's Office strives to increase the proficiency and professionalism of all staff members through training.
3. The Island County Coroner's Office endeavors to develop and strengthen partnerships with the public safety community.

Jurisdiction

Island County is comprised of Whidbey Island and Camano Island. Towns on Whidbey Island include Oak Harbor, Coupeville, Greenbank, Freeland, Langley, and Clinton. According to the 2022 census, Island County has a population of 87,100 with a racial makeup of 78.6% Caucasian, 4.6% Asian, 2.6% African American, 0.9% American Indian and Alaska Native, and 0.3% Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander. Those of Hispanic or Latino make up 8.0% of the population. United States veterans make up 17.6% of Island County's population.

Island County Coroner's Office conducts parallel/independent death investigations with all the law enforcement agencies in the county. These agencies include:

Island County Sheriff's Office (ICSO)
Oak Harbor Police Department (OHPD)
Langley Police Department (LPD)
Coupeville Marshalls
Washington State Patrol (WSP)
Naval Criminal Investigative Service (NCIS)

Service

The Island County Coroner's responds to calls for death investigation 24 hours a day. Shifts are covered by either the coroner (full time) or the Chief Deputy Coroner (full time).

The cause and manner of death is determined by conducting thorough medicolegal death investigations. This includes responding to scenes and:

1. Interviewing public safety personnel, witnesses, and family
2. Documenting the scene with photographs, sketches, and measurements
3. Documenting the decedent with diagrams and photographs
4. Performing a complete physical examination of decedent to locate/document all signs of trauma/injury.
5. Transportation to morgue facility
6. Obtain medical records.
7. Draw biological samples.
8. Fingerprint decedents
9. Locate/notify next of kin.
10. Positively identify the decedent
11. Complete a comprehensive yet objective written report for use by the pathologist and other agencies.

Cases that warrant an autopsy are transported to The Island County Coroner's Office morgue facility where a thorough examination will be conducted. Biological samples are drawn, and samples are sent to the toxicology laboratory for testing.

Following the completion of an autopsy, decedents are released to the families chosen funeral home where final disposition arrangements can be made.

Statistics

Coroner case: deaths that fall under jurisdiction of this office and are investigated.

- Sudden death of an apparent healthy person with no known or significant medical history.
- Suspected natural death in which there is no current physician to certify the death.
- Death in which there are abuse or neglect concerns.
- Violent or suspicious deaths
- Traffic-related deaths
- Suicides
- All child deaths
- All premature births and still births over 20 weeks gestation.
- All accidental deaths (falls, industrial, recreational)
- Deaths attributed to drug overdose or drug related.
- Deaths that occur while in legal/court/jail/prison custody.
- Deaths due to unforeseen complications of therapy, surgery, or diagnostic procedures.
- Deaths due to injury or fracture that either was directly or contributory to decline to death, this includes those injuries that occurred years earlier.
- Deaths due to contagious disease that may be a public health hazard.
- Indigent or unclaimed remains.

Non-Jurisdiction Assumed (NJA):

1. Cases that occur under the care of a medical facility.
2. When a decedent is on hospice under a doctor's care.
3. When death occurs over the age of 66 years old with history natural disease that would have contributed towards death.







