

Media Release

Snohomish County
Medical Examiner's Office
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For Immediate Release

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Statement from Dr. Daniel Selove, Snohomish County Medical Examiner

“The Snohomish County Medical Examiner’s Office has a very specific task: determining the cause and manner of death. We scientifically examine the body of a deceased individual, and by using medical and forensic tools, we determine the most likely cause of death. In many cases, the cause of death is straightforward. There is a gunshot wound, or severe trauma from a car accident, or someone has clearly overdosed, as proven by tests. The human body usually gives us obvious clues for these answers.”

“Once we make a determination as to the cause of death, we then try to determine the manner of death. In other words, not what caused the death, but the most likely events leading up to the death. Was it a car accident, whether intentional or not? Was it homicide, where one person caused another’s death, whether intentional or not? This process can be straightforward, but is also more open to interpretation and ambiguity in some cases. We interview family members and friends. We look at photos of the body as it was found. We look for other clues that might be beyond just what the body provides.”

“In the case of determining cause of death in a suicide, there are usually few questions. The death occurred through a very specific action. However, the manner can be more ambiguous. Unless there is a suicide note or other direct communication from the person before their death, there

Cause of Death

Cause of Death is a term used to indicate the medical cause of death, listing the disease(s) or injuries that caused death. Specific cause of death information is recorded on the death certificate and is entered into the Vital Statistics System of the State of Washington.

Manner of Death

Manner of Death is the way to categorize death as required by the Washington State Department of Health. The classifications are Natural, Accident, Suicide, Homicide, Undetermined, and Pending. Only medical examiners and coroners may certify non-natural deaths.

Accident is defined for Medical Examiner death certification purposes as an unnatural death resulting from an inadvertent chance happening.

Suicide is defined for Medical Examiner death certification purposes as a death from self-inflicted injury with evidence of intent to die.

Homicide is defined as the action of one person directly causing the death of another. All murders are homicides, not all homicides are murder. An example may be an unintentional firearms-related hunting death.

Undetermined is for cases that have very little available information about the circumstances surrounding death (e.g., partial skeletal remains) or where known information equally supports, or conflicts with, more than one manner of death.

Pending is a temporary designation for cause and/or manner when additional investigation, information and/or test results are required for certification. Pending is generally amended as soon as additional information becomes available.

When a death is unwitnessed the date of discovery is recorded as the date of death.

A full explanation of Cause and Manner can be found in our Annual Report at www.snohomishcountywa.gov/198.

may not be any clues. In those cases, we have to make a decision based on the preponderance of evidence. If after all of the evidence is examined, a definitive manner of death cannot be determined, then we say that it is “undetermined.” This means that we cannot say with a high degree of certainty what the manner of death was. However, this determination does not in any way prejudice the police investigation or prosecution if a crime is suspected. It just means the medical examination cannot determine with an appropriate degree of certainty the manner of death.”

“In the case of Ben Keita, the Snohomish County Medical Examiner’s Office determined that the cause of death was hanging. There was no question about this. By looking at the preponderance of evidence, including discussions with the family, the manner of death could not be determined with a great degree of confidence. The “undetermined” manner of death does not exclude homicide or suicide; the evidence is just not conclusive enough to provide a high degree of confidence for any other determination.”

“The police and prosecutors will make final determinations about whether there is evidence that a crime was committed.”

February 28, 2017

The Snohomish County Medical Examiner’s Office has completed the identification and examination of an 18-year old male who died in the 600 block of 89th Ave SE in Lake Stevens on January 9, 2017. The decedent is **Ben M. Keita** of Lake Stevens, WA. The cause of death hanging. The manner of death is Undetermined.

For further information, please contact the Lake Stevens Police Department.

The Snohomish County Medical Examiner’s Office has completed the identification and examination of a 37-year old female who was involved in a traffic collision at the 7700 block Hardeson Road on February 24, 2017. The decedent is **Athena A. Pishue** of Seattle, WA. The cause of death is blunt force injuries. The manner of death is Accident.

For further information, please contact the Everett Police Department.

The Snohomish County Medical Examiner’s Office has completed the identification and examination of a 66-year old female who died in the 13500 block of North Creek Drive in Mill Creek on February 21, 2017. The decedent is **Norensa Namber Pillias** of Mill Creek, WA. The cause of death is multiple stab wounds of the trunk. The manner of death is Homicide.

For further information, please contact the Mill Creek Police Department.

February 22, 2017

The Snohomish County Medical Examiner’s Office has completed the identification and examination of a 78-year old female who died in the 12100 block of 212th Street SE near Snohomish on February 20, 2017. The decedent is **Barbara A. Decker** of Snohomish, WA. The cause of death is incised wound of the neck. The manner of death is Homicide

For further information, please contact the Snohomish County Sheriff's Office.

February 15, 2017

The Snohomish County Medical Examiner's Office has completed the identification and examination of a 33-year old male who was in a police-involved shooting in Lake Stevens, WA on February 9, 2017 and died at a local hospital later the same day. The decedent is **Juan J. Salinas** of Lake Stevens, WA. The cause of death is a gunshot wound of the abdomen. The manner of death is Homicide.

For further information, please contact the Everett Police Department.

February 7, 2014

The Snohomish County Medical Examiner's Office has completed the identification and examination of a 12-year old female who was involved in a traffic collision northbound I-5 at 164th Street SW on February 03, 2017. The decedent is **Amiyah S. Johnson** of Everett, WA. The cause of death is multiple blunt force injuries. The manner of death is Accident.

For further information, please contact the Washington State Patrol.

February 6, 2017

The Snohomish County Medical Examiner's Office has completed the identification and examination of a 24-year old male who died in the 1900 block of Casino Road in Everett, WA on February 5, 2017. The decedent is **Bradley M. Doherty** of Everett, WA. The cause of death is a gunshot wound of the trunk. The manner of death is Homicide.

For further information, please contact the Everett Police Department.

February 1, 2017

The Snohomish County Medical Examiner's Office has confirmed the identification and completed the examination of a 36-year-old male who was in an officer-involved shooting in the 19000th block of State Route 99 in Lynnwood on January 30, 2017. The decedent has been identified as **Jeremy R. Dowell** of Mountlake Terrace, WA. The cause of death is multiple gunshot wounds. The manner of death is Homicide.

For further information, please contact the Snohomish County Multi-Agency Response Team.

January 26, 2017

The Snohomish County Medical Examiner's Office has completed the identification and examination of a 31-year old male who was involved in a car versus pedestrian collision in the 6900 block of Seaway Blvd in Everett, WA on January 25, 2017. The decedent is **Cullen M. Thompson** of Lake Stevens, WA. The cause of death is multiple blunt force injuries of head and neck. The manner of death is Accident.

For further information, please contact the Everett Police Department.

January 23, 2017

The Snohomish County Medical Examiner's Office has completed the identification and examination of a 53-year old female who was involved in a car versus pedestrian collision in the 4600 block of 176th Street

SW in Lynnwood on January 17, 2017. The decedent is **Tammy L. Stover** of Lynnwood, WA. The cause of death is multiple blunt force injuries. The manner of death is Accident.

For further information, please contact the Lynnwood Police Department.

January 17, 2017

The Snohomish County Medical Examiner's Office has completed the identification and examination of a 48-year old female who was involved in a traffic collision east bound SR 92 near mile post 4 on December 22, 2016. The decedent is **Lisa K. Hunt** of Lake Stevens, WA. The cause of death is multiple blunt force injuries. The manner of death is Accident.

For further information, please contact the Washington State Patrol.

January 4, 2017

The Snohomish County Medical Examiner's Office has completed the identification and examination of a 93-year old male who was involved in a house fire in the 16300 block of Roosevelt Road in Snohomish on January 3, 2017. The decedent is **Glen E. Allen** of Snohomish, WA. The cause of death is thermal injuries and inhalation of soot and products of combustion. The manner of death is Accident.

For further information, please contact the Snohomish County Sheriff's Office.

The Snohomish County Medical Examiner's Office has completed the identification and examination of a 26-year old male who was involved in a traffic collision on January 1, 2017. The decedent is **Ivan A. Rosales Cabanillas** of Everett, WA. The cause of death is drowning. The manner of death is Accident.

For further information, please contact the Washington State Patrol.