HENNEPIN COUNTY MINNESOTA

Medical Examiner Annual Report for 2022











Hennepin County Medical Examiner — Annual Report for 2022

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Hennepin County Medical Examiner

Mission

To investigate and determine cause and manner of death in all cases within the jurisdiction of the office in compliance with Minnesota statutes, and to advance the knowledge of death investigative professionals and partnering agencies through training and education to improve health, safety and quality of life.

Vision

The Medical Examiner envisions a standard of excellence whereby death investigative professionals conduct thorough, accurate death investigations by harnessing innovative technologies and solutions in a regional office that serves a diverse population with timely, accurate and compassionate investigations run by professional staff equipped with state-of-the-art technology and resources.

Welcome

Thank you for reading our 2022 Annual Report. Included within these pages is a statistical breakdown of the total caseload of our three-county service area — Hennepin, Dakota, and Scott Counties.

The Hennepin County Medical Examiner's Office is accredited by the National Association of Medical Examiners and administers an Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education approved fellowship program in forensic pathology.

In January of 2022 the office moved into its new facility, located in Minnetonka. This was the culmination of nearly 10 years of planning, design, and building. We worked with Leo A. Daly, MWL Architects, Knutson Construction, and Hennepin County facilities staff to build a space that will serve the residents of our jurisdiction for the next 50 years. We worked with the Minnesota Legislature and the Minnesota Department of Health to facilitate statutory and regulatory changes regarding office functions ranging from digital fingerprint identifications to radiology procedures.

The new medical examiner's office design was centered on several key principles — ergonomics, workplace safety, sustainability, and employee access to natural light and greenspace. The result is arguably the most technologically sophisticated and aesthetic medical examiner's office in the US. To date, the office has garnered three awards for its design: an American Institute of Architects (Minneapolis) Merit Award, a Top Projects of 2022 designation from Finance & Commerce, and a 2023 Achievement Award from the National Association of Counties.

I invite you to learn more about our office as highlighted in the pages that follow.

Respectfully,

Andrew Baker, M.D.

Chief Medical Examiner Hennepin, Dakota and Scott counties









Building awards

Medical Examiner's Office building awards for its design: an American Institute of Architects (Minneapolis) Merit Award, a Top Projects of 2022 designation from Finance & Commerce, and a 2023 Achievement Award from the National Association of Counties







Jurisdiction Map

The Hennepin County Medical Examiner's Office has jurisdiction to investigate all sudden or unexpected deaths in Hennepin, Dakota and Scott counties.

Population by county (2022)

- Hennepin 1,260,121
- Dakota 443,341
- Scott 154,520

Area by county in square miles

- Hennepin 607
- Dakota 587
- Scott 368

Number of cities by county

Hennepin

45 cities and 1 unorganized territory (Fort Snelling)

Dakota

21 cities and multiple townships and unincorporated communities

Scott

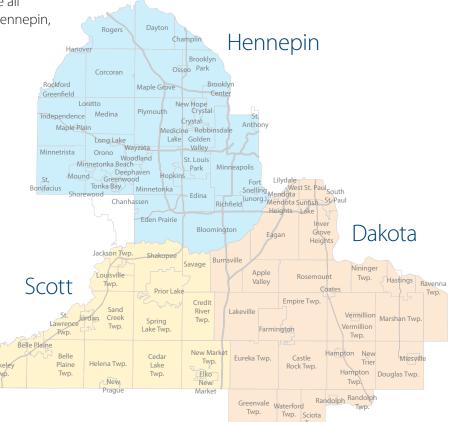
7 cities and multiple townships and unincorporated communities





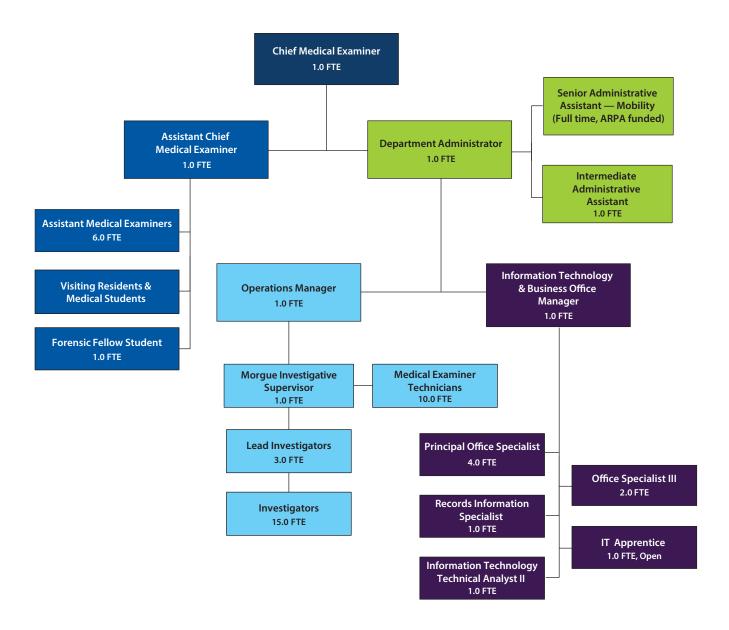


Andrew M. Baker, M.D., Chief Medical Examiner of Hennepin, Dakota and Scott counties.





Organizational Chart



Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) total positions: 52.6

Permanent FTE positions: 49.0

Limited Duration FTE and FTE Expense positions: 3.6

Medical Examiner's Office Adopted Budget — 2022

The Medical Examiner is responsible for investigation of all known or suspected homicides, suicides, accidental deaths, drug related deaths, medically unattended deaths, and deaths which might constitute a threat to public health and safety that occur under the Hennepin County Medical Examiner's jurisdiction including Hennepin, Dakota and Scott Counties. The office provides autopsy services for other jurisdictions on a referral basis and is responsible for cremation approvals. The Medical Examiner harnesses innovative technologies and solutions in a regional office that services a diverse population with timely, accurate and compassionate investigations run by professional staff equipped with state-of-the-art technology and resources.

Budget Summary	2020 Actual	2021 Budget	2022 Budget
Budgeted Property Tax Requirement*	\$5,242,738	\$5,406,173	\$6,584,434
Other Taxes	0	0	0
Federal	286,652	46,108	0
State	0	0	0
Local	1,636,324	1,660,785	1,839,304
Investment Earnings	0	0	0
Fees for Services	60,988	60,988	0
Fines and Forfeitures	0	0	0
Licenses and Permits	564,157	490,000	565,000
Other Revenue	131,853	190,000	125,000
Other Financing	0	0	0
Total Revenues	\$7,922,712	\$7,854,054	\$9,113,738
Personal Services	\$6,039,996	\$6,218,822	\$7,369,609
Commodities	92,651	87,800	89,800
Services	1,825,481	1,448,724	1,599,229
Public Aid Assistance	0	0	0
Capital Outlay	0	0	0
Other Charges	47,482	98,708	55,100
Grants	0	0	0
Total Expenditures	\$8,005,610	\$7,854,054	\$9,113,738

44.0

45.2

Budgeted Positions (Full-Time Equivalents)

52.6

^{*}Reflects the adjusted property tax requirement budget, not actual property tax collections.

Persistence, Partnership and DNA Lead to Identification

Investigator Lindsay Wright Hennepin County Medical Examiner Investigator

When I first started at the Medical Examiner (HCME) back in 2015, I knew I had a passion for finding families and returning their loved ones to them. I did not know I would be given the opportunity to give names to the unnamed as well.

John Doe was an adult male who was found in an abandoned train shed in September of 2014 in Rosemount, MN. No identification was found inside the shed, and due to significant decomposition, identification was challenging. HCME and the Rosemount Police reached out to the public for help, publishing detailed descriptions of the clothing, leather jacket, distinctive eyewear, and the knife sheath that were found in the shed. The knife sheath had numerous initials carved in it and was thought to be a significant lead. All evidence at the scene indicated that the man likely died in late November or early December of 2013.

Many leads were ruled out based on dates of last contact, physical descriptions, and various other factors. Eventually HCME sent the man's skull to the FBI, which generated a model of a middleaged white male that most closely resembled Will Ferrell. This, along with DNA profiling, gave a picture of someone whose genealogical ancestry was probably from the south, most likely from the Louisiana, Texas, or Mississippi area. Despite these details and a targeted geographical social media and law enforcement release, few leads were generated.

In 2019, HCME submitted DNA results to Family Tree DNA for genetic genealogy leads. The first family hits were very distant relatives. I learned all about cousins and cousins thrice removed. The initial hits were thought to be maternally related to the man. Down the rabbit hole I went. A family tree started to form, and I reached out to several individuals asking for more information on their family. Asking about family history was personal, and often family secrets were revealed. Thanks to



Persistence, Partnership and DNA Lead to Identification, continued

the Rosemount Police, a handful of DNA kits were sent out for testing, bringing us closer to clarity on familial relations.

Many helped building family trees during COVID, and the process of mapping out possible relatives became easier. Ancestry.com, Find a Grave, and Legacy were great resources—but as close as I felt I was, it was never close enough.

Further consultation with genetic genealogists suggested that the man was most likely related through paternal DNA. A lightbulb moment. The tree I had built had a branch in common. The grandfathers were brothers. Unfortunately, these brothers had complicated family structures and more than 20 children between them. Back down the rabbit hole I went.

In 2021 another DNA sample was sent out to a woman that I had been communicating with on Ancestry.com. This sample came back, showing she was most likely a full-blooded aunt of our unidentified male. Through communications I learned that her older sister had married and had a child in New York. Her sister then divorced and never maintained a relationship with the child. A possible name and year of birth were provided and the search was on.

The Accurint database used by the office showed no active address, but his last known address was in Cohocton, New York, in 2013. Rosemount Police reached out to the Cohocton Police who confirmed that the man had been reported missing by his employer in September of 2013. The man had returned from a work trip late one night and left his work cell and laptop at the employer's office. Cohocton Police had contacted the man's wife at the time. She confirmed that the man had taken personal papers from the home, leaving his wedding ring and house keys in the mailbox. A missing person report was then filed 9/25/2013. A State Trooper in Montana reported making contact with the man on 9/27/2013 at a rest area. The man assured the trooper that he was physically well but

that he had quit his job and just started driving. The man requested that his location not be disclosed to the concerned parties, but assured the trooper that he would make contact with his New York people in the future. The missing person report was then closed.

HCME and Rosemount PD asked for help from New York State Patrol to contact the man's spouse. After the initial shock of finding out that our unidentified man might be her long missing husband, she wanted to help in any way. Unfortunately, the two had no children together and no personal items would have been of evidentiary value in DNA testing. She relayed that the man's father might still be living, likely in Tennessee. Yet another DNA kit was sent to Tennessee, and after waiting patiently the results were conclusive.

Over 8 years from when he was last known alive, and after years of data analysis, the assistance of multiple law enforcement agencies, forensic partners, DNA labs, and genealogists and digging deep into family trees, John Doe finally had a name: James Raymond Everett, husband of Patricia. Although it will never be known why James ended up in the train shed where he was found, he now had a name, and his family had some semblance of closure.

A New Address for the Departed: The Process of Moving a Morgue

The Hennepin County Medical Examiner's Office moved into its newly constructed facility in Minnetonka on January 3rd, 2022. Moving a regular workplace from one place to another is a chore, but it is even more challenging when you need to move specimens, decedents, evidence, hazardous substances and specialized equipment, as well as staff to a facility that is over twice the size of your current facility—all during a pandemic. Our vault contained over 100 years of paper records and X-rays which were transferred prior to the move and scanned and now available digitally. There is not a playbook for this, and it took the efforts of many employees working together to accomplish one goal.

We took ownership of the facility on November 1st, 2021, which allowed time for staff training on new equipment, purchasing and stocking supplies for the new facility, and installing the necessary IT equipment needed so staff could show up on day one and do their work. A seamless transition was important as the Medical Examiner's Office operates 24/7 and performs autopsies every day. With many months of coordination and planning, we were able to resume our autopsy operations on January 4th, 2022, with only one day off from autopsy services to move and unpack.

The numbers tell part of the story as well:

Old Facility New Facility Square Footage 28,000 square feet 67,000 square feet Staff members 42 58 Body storage 36 130 5 12 **Autopsy Stations**

As with any move, decisions were made about whether to move it, donate it, or trash it. Much of the specialized autopsy equipment that we

X-ray

did not need to bring with us was donated to the Miga Solutions Foundation (migafoundation.org), which accepts useable medical equipment from hospitals and medical facilities from across the United States and provides this equipment for free to communities in need around the world.

When we moved into our previous office in the Forensic Science Building downtown Minneapolis in 1998, this renovated Hennepin HealthCare food service building was home to both the Sheriff's Office Crime Lab and the Medical Examiner's Office. The Medical Examiner's Office, since its inception in 1964, has always been the morgue for Hennepin HealthCare (HHC, formerly HCMC), but upon moving to our new facility, this service was taken over by HHC and is now located in the hospital facility. The Crime Lab had outgrown their space, so our old facility is now the home of the Hennepin County Sheriff's Office Crime Lab. We miss being close to our partners in the Crime Lab and Hennepin HealthCare, but are happy to have continued our long-standing partnership with these agencies with continued service agreements and educational collaboration.

We are thrilled to be settled into our beautiful new building — a building that provides a safe and calm environment for not only our staff, who are exposed to physical and mental stressors in their

> important daily work in death investigation and autopsy services, but also for our decedents so their families will know they are safe and secure and receiving the best possible care. We are so thankful for the hard work of all our staff

and for the support of Hennepin, Dakota and Scott Counties and the State of Minnesota for the funding that made our new facility possible!

CT and X-ray

Radiology services

Functions of the Medical Examiner

Receiving death reports

When a reportable death occurs, the Medical Examiner's Office gathers pertinent data, including the person's name, address, age, sex, race, marital status, next of kin, a summary of medical history, physical findings, and name of last attending physician.

Preserving evidence

At the location of the death, the Medical Examiner Investigator takes custody and arranges transport of the body, personal property, and associated evidence.

Deciding jurisdiction

The Medical Examiner decides who has jurisdiction to investigate the death, and reserves the right to accept or decline jurisdiction. If the person died from natural causes and has seen an attending physician within 365 days, the office usually declines jurisdiction. If the office accepts jurisdiction, or if the death is due in part to an injury, the Medical Examiner must sign the death certificate.

Facilitating tissue, eye, and organ donation

The Medical Examiner must receive notification and provide authorization before any agency arranges to recover tissues, eyes, or organs.

Performing autopsies

The Medical Examiner determines whether state interest compels an autopsy to answer medical and legal questions in the public interest, to protect public health, or to address a question of law. Families have the right under state law to object to an autopsy under some circumstances.

Determining cause and manner of death

The Medical Examiner assists families, law enforcement agencies, and the legal system by determining a scientifically unbiased and logical cause and manner of death. In many cases, family members benefit from the information derived from a death investigation and autopsy.

Managing public and private information

Basic demographic information and the cause and manner of death are matters of public record under Minnesota law (Minnesota Statute §13.83). The Medical Examiner treats the rest of the information as protected non-public data and gives it the same discretion as a medical record.

In homicide cases, the Medical Examiner provides information and autopsy reports only to the law enforcement agencies investigating the death and to the prosecutor in the county where the homicide occurred.

Types of Reportable Cases

Deaths that meet certain criteria in Hennepin, Dakota or Scott County must be reported, including all sudden or unexpected deaths and all deaths that may be due entirely, or in part, to any factor other than natural disease. These include:

- 1. Unnatural deaths, including violent deaths arising from homicide, suicide, or accident;
- 2. Deaths due to a fire or associated with burns or chemical, electrical, or radiation injury;
- 3. Unexplained or unexpected perinatal and postpartum maternal deaths;
- 4. Deaths under suspicious, unusual, or unexpected circumstances;
- 5. Deaths of people whose bodies are to be cremated or otherwise disposed of in such a manner that the bodies will later be unavailable for examination:
- 6. Deaths of inmates of public institutions and people in custody of law enforcement officers, who have not been hospitalized primarily for organic disease;
- 7. Deaths that occur during, in association with, or as the result of diagnostic, therapeutic, or anesthetic procedures [these include operating room deaths];
- 8. Deaths due to culpable neglect;
- 9. Stillbirths of 20 weeks or longer gestation, not attended by a physician;
- 10. Sudden deaths of people not affected by recognizable disease;
- 11. Unexpected deaths notwithstanding a history of underlying disease;
- 12. Deaths in which a fracture of a major bone such as a femur, humerus, or tibia has occurred within the past six months;
- 13. Deaths not attended by a physician, occurring outside of a licensed health care facility or licensed residential hospice program;

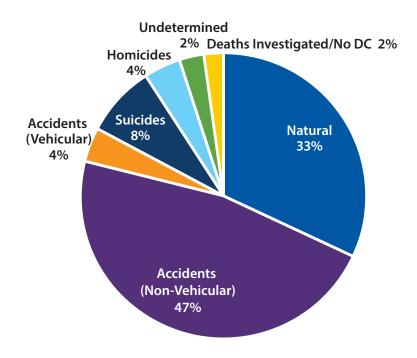
- 14. Deaths of people not seen by their physician within the past 120 days;
- 15. Deaths occurring in an emergency department;
- 16. Stillbirths or deaths of newborn infants in which there has been maternal use of or exposure to unprescribed controlled substances, including street drugs, or in which there is history or evidence of maternal trauma:
- 17. Unexpected deaths of children;
- 18. Solid organ donors;
- 19. Unidentified bodies;
- 20. Skeletonized remains:
- 21. Deaths occurring within 24 hours of arrival at a health care facility, if death is unexpected;
- 22. Deaths associated with the decedent's employment;
- 23. Deaths of nonregistered hospice patients or patients in unlicensed hospice programs; and
- 24. Deaths attributable to acts of terrorism.

2022 Aggregate Data: Total, Hennepin, Dakota, and Scott Counties:

Total	Hennepin	Dakota	Scott	Referral
9,214	6,717	1,931	548	18
100%	5 72.9	9% 21.0	% 5.99	% 0.2%
2,760	2,270	367	123	0
6,411	4,427	1,561	423	0
2,760	2,270	367	123	
868	687	140	41	
1,269	1,073	146	50	
116	99	11	6	
226	149	58	19	
116	108	5	3	
103	92	7	4	
62	62	0	0	
1,396	1,129	183	66	
18	13	4	1	
78	62	13	3	
13	10	0	3	
792	587	153	52	
547	396	117	34	
195	143	34	18	
50	48	2	0	
1,382	1,116	206	60	
11 627	9151	1,933	543	
11,027				
237	220	14	1	
	9,214 100% 2,760 6,411 2,760 868 1,269 116 226 116 103 62 1,396 18 78 13 792 547 195 50	9,214 6,717 100% 72.9 2,760 2,270 6,411 4,427 2,760 2,270 868 687 1,269 1,073 116 99 226 149 116 108 103 92 62 62 18 13 78 62 13 10 792 587 547 396 195 143 50 48	9,214 6,717 1,931 100% 72.9% 21.0 2,760 2,270 367 6,411 4,427 1,561 2,760 2,270 367 868 687 140 1,269 1,073 146 116 99 11 226 149 58 116 108 5 103 92 7 62 62 0 1,396 1,129 183 18 13 4 78 62 13 13 10 0 792 587 153 547 396 117 195 143 34 50 48 2 1,382 1,116 206	9,214 6,717 1,931 548 100% 72.9% 21.0% 5.96 2,760 2,270 367 123 6,411 4,427 1,561 423 2,760 2,270 367 123 868 687 140 41 1,269 1,073 146 50 116 99 11 6 226 149 58 19 116 108 5 3 103 92 7 4 62 62 0 0 1,396 1,129 183 66 18 13 4 1 78 62 13 3 13 10 0 3 792 587 153 52 547 396 117 34 195 143 34 18 50 48 2 0 <

Jurisdiction Accepted Cases by Manner of Death: Hennepin, Dakota, and Scott Counties 2022

	Hennepin		Dakota		Scott		
	total	by %	total	by %	total	by %	Total
Jurisdiction Accepted	2,270	82%	367	13%	123	5%	2,760
Natural	687	79%	140	16%	41	5%	868
Accidents (Non-Vehicular)	1,073	85%	146	11%	50	4%	1,269
Accidents (Vehicular)	99	85%	11	10%	6	5%	116
Suicides	149	66%	58	26%	19	8%	226
Homicides	108	93%	5	4%	3	3%	116
Undetermined	92	89%	7	7%	4	4%	103
Deaths Investigated/ No Death Certificate	62	100%	0	0%	0	0%	62

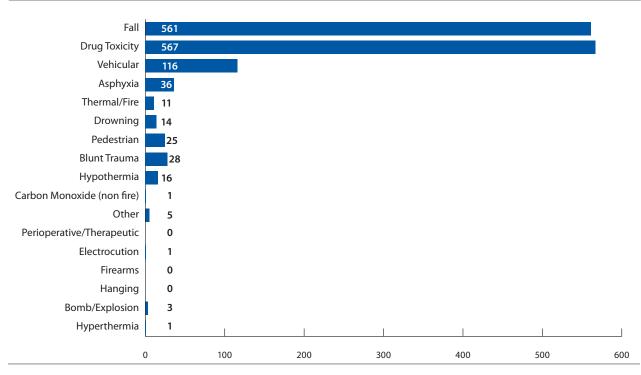


Natural Deaths: Hennepin, Dakota, and Scott Counties 2022

	Total (Exam + No Exam)			
	Hennepin	Dakota	Scott	Total
Arteriosclerotic Heart Disease	29	6	3	38
Arteriosclerotic and Hypertensive Heart Disease	32	7	4	43
Hypertensive Heart Disease	7	2	0	9
Valvular Heart Disease	0	0	0	0
Aortic Disease	9	1	1	11
Cardiac (miscellaneous)	18	4	2	24
Natural Causes	410	82	26	518
Chronic Alcoholism	71	10	1	82
Cerebrovascular Disease	16	5	0	21
Seizure Disorder	1	3	0	4
Neurological Disease (other)	5	0	0	5
Respiratory (asthma, COPD)	5	1	2	8
Gastrointestinal and Hepatic	10	3	1	14
Genitourinary and Renal	1	0	0	1
Infectious Diseases	24	7	1	32
Diabetes and metabolic	13	1	0	14
Pulmonary Thromboemboli	9	4	0	13
Prematurity	2	1	0	3
Malignancy	11	2	0	13
Congenital Diseases	3	0	0	3
Debility	5	0	0	5
Other	6	1	0	7
TOTAL	687	140	41	868

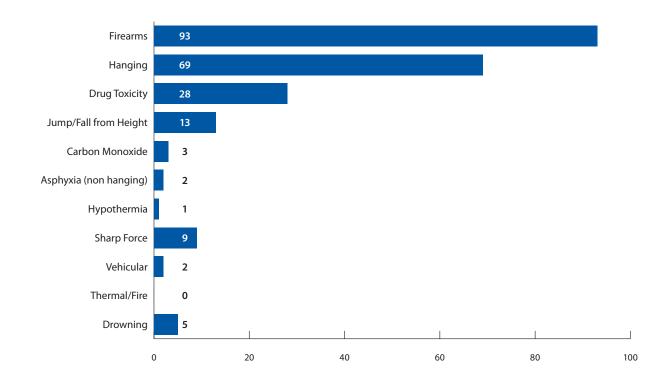
Accidental Deaths: Hennepin, Dakota, and Scott Counties 2022

	Hennepin	Dakota	Scott	TOTAL
Fall	445	88	28	561
Drug Toxicity	508	43	16	567
Vehicular	99	11	6	116
Asphyxia	30	5	1	36
Thermal/Fire	11	0	0	11
Drowning	13	1	0	14
Pedestrian	20	5	0	25
Blunt Trauma	23	2	3	28
Hypothermia	14	1	1	16
Carbon Monoxide (non fire)	1	0	0	1
Other	4	1	0	5
Perioperative/Therapeutic	0	0	0	0
Electrocution	1	0	0	1
Firearms	0	0	0	0
Hanging	0	0	0	0
Bomb/Explosion	3	0	0	3
Hyperthermia	0	0	1	1
TOTAL	1172	157	56	1385



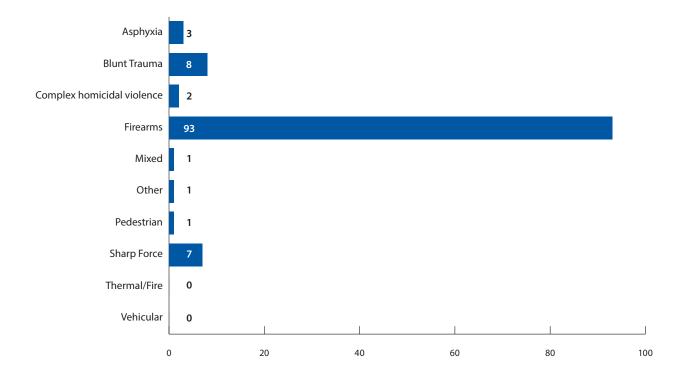
Suicide Deaths: Hennepin, Dakota, and Scott Counties 2022

	Hennepin	Dakota	Scott	TOTAL
Firearms	49	36	8	93
Hanging	53	9	7	69
Drug Toxicity	20	7	1	28
Jump/Fall from Height	13	0	0	13
Carbon Monoxide	1	1	1	3
Asphyxia (non hanging)	0	2	0	2
Hypothermia	1	0	0	1
Sharp Force	6	2	1	9
Vehicular	2	0	0	2
Thermal/Fire	0	0	0	0
Drowning	4	1	0	5
TOTAL	149	58	19	226



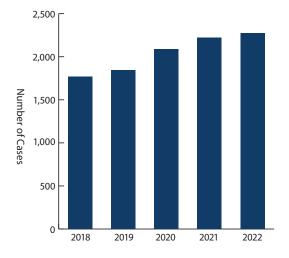
Homicide Deaths: Hennepin, Dakota, and Scott Counties 2022

Hennepin	Dakota	Scott	TOTAL
2	1	0	3
7	1	0	8
1	0	1	2
89	3	1	93
0	0	1	1
1	0	0	1
1	0	0	1
7	0	0	7
0	0	0	0
0	0	0	0
108	5	3	116
	2 7 1 89 0 1 1 7 0	2 1 7 1 1 0 89 3 0 0 1 0 1 0 7 0 0 0 0 0 0 0	2 1 0 7 1 0 1 0 1 0 1 89 3 1 0 0 1 1 0 0 1 1 0 0 1 0 0 1 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0



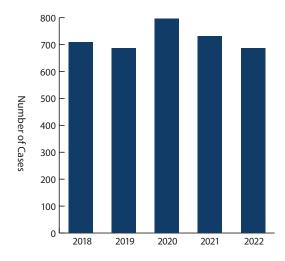
Cases Accepted: Hennepin County 2018–2022

Year	Number of Cases
2018	1,769
2019	1,841
2020	2,088
2021	2,222
2022	2,270



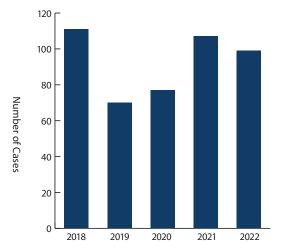
Natural Deaths: Hennepin County 2018–2022

Year	Number of Cases
2018	708
2019	687
2020	797
2021	731
2022	687



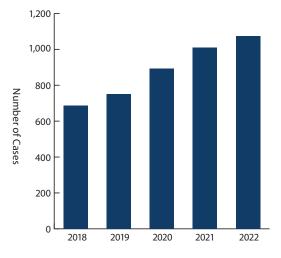
Vehicular Accidents: Hennepin County 2018–2022

Year	Number of Cases
2018	111
2019	70
2020	77
2021	107
2022	99



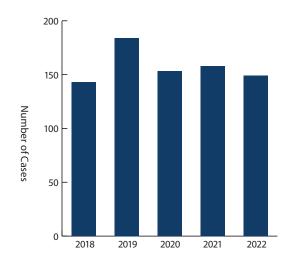
Accidents (Non-Vehicular): Hennepin County 2018–2022

Year	Number of Cases
2018	687
2019	752
2020	893
2021	1,009
2022	1,073



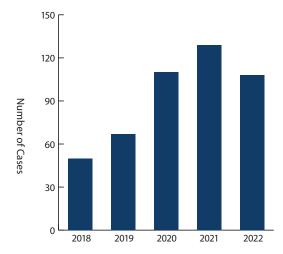
Suicides: Hennepin County 2018–2022

Year	Number of Cases
2018	143
2019	184
2020	153
2021	158
2022	149



Homicides: Hennepin County 2018–2022

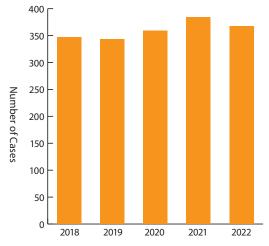
Year	Number of Cases
2018	50
2019	67
2020	110
2021	129
2022	108



Cases Accepted:

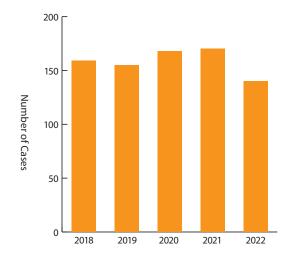
Dakota County 2018–2022

Year	Number of Cases
2018	347
2019	343
2020	359
2021	384
2022	367



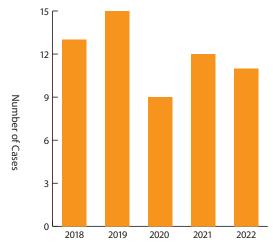
Natural Deaths: Dakota County 2018–2022

Year	Number of Cases
2018	159
2019	155
2020	168
2021	170
2022	140



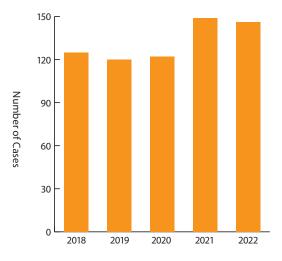
Vehicular Accidents: Dakota County 2018–2022

Year	Number of Cases
2018	13
2019	15
2020	9
2021	12
2022	11



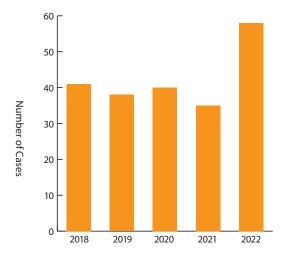
Accidents (Non-Vehicular): Dakota County 2018–2022

Year	Number of Cases
2018	125
2019	120
2020	122
2021	149
2022	146



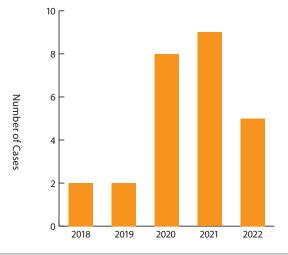
Suicides: Dakota County 2018–2022

Year	Number of Cases
2018	41
2019	38
2020	40
2021	35
2022	58



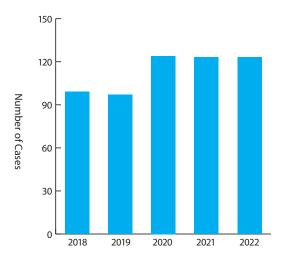
Homicides: Dakota County 2018–2022

Year	Number of Cases
2018	2
2019	2
2020	8
2021	9
2022	5



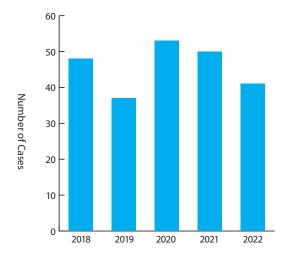
Cases Accepted: Scott County 2018–2022

Year	Number of Cases
2018	99
2019	97
2020	124
2021	123
2022	123



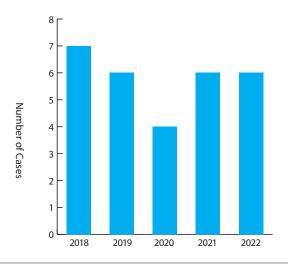
Natural Deaths: Scott County 2018-2022

Year	Number of Cases
2018	48
2019	37
2020	53
2021	52
2022	41



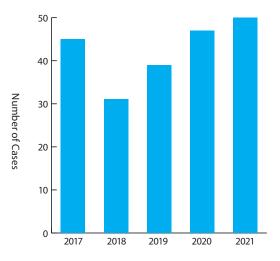
Vehicular Accidents: Scott County 2018–2022

Year	Number of Cases
2018	7
2019	6
2020	4
2021	6
2022	6



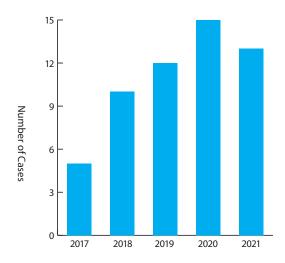
Accidents (Non-Vehicular): Scott County 2018–2022

Year	Number of Cases
2018	31
2019	39
2020	47
2021	50
2022	50



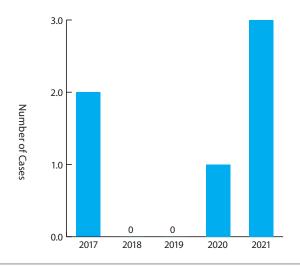
Suicides: Scott County 2018–2022

Year	Number of Cases
2018	10
2019	12
2020	15
2021	13
2021	19



Homicides: Scott County 2018–2022

Year	Number of Cases
2018	2
2019	0
2020	0
2021	1
2022	3









Hennepin County Medical Examiner

14250 County Road 62 Minnetonka, MN 55345

612-215-6300 hennepin.us/me

Andrew M. Baker, M.D., Chief Medical Examiner of Hennepin, Dakota and Scott counties