Lewis County



Coroner’s Office

## 585 NW Center Street

## Chehalis, WA 98532

## 360-740-1376

Warren McLeod, MA, D-ABMDI Coroner

2020 Annual Report

It is important to remember that every statistic in this report represents a person who is missed by family and friends and is also a loss to our community.

**PURPOSE/GOALS**

The Lewis County Coroner’s Office (LCCO) serves the county by investigating sudden, unexpected, violent, suspicious and unnatural deaths. All members of the LCCO staff recognize that every death investigated involves grieving family members as well as friends and co-workers. Conducting timely and complete death investigations is necessary, in part, to assist those grieving people. Complete investigations also help families with the settling of issues such as estate and insurance claims as well as any criminal or civil action. Often times questions com up long after the death that were not thought of at the time and complete and thorough investigations aid in the answering of these questions.

Deaths investigated by the LCCO include on-the-job deaths and these investigations are conducting in conjunction with the Washington State Department of Labor & Industries (L&I).

The LCCO also plays a role in the area of public health by isolating and identifying the causes of deaths that might affect large groups of the population. If an infectious agent or toxin is implicated in a death the LCCO works with Lewis County Public health and the Center for Disease Control (CDC) to ensure family members and other contacts of the decedent received any needed medical treatment.

In cases that are unexpected deaths outside of a medical facility, suspicious circumstances, homicide, suicide, drug related or traffic deaths the LCCO works closely with the jurisdictional law enforcement agency. The agencies conduct parallel investigations, cooperating fully with each other, while maintaining their independent roles. All members of the LCCO staff are subject to being subpoenaed to testify in civil/criminal cases as to the extent of the investigation conducted.

The LCCO is dedicated to developing community partnerships to reduce preventable deaths. We participate in the following groups/activities:

Lewis County Drowning Prevention Coalition

Cribs For Kids (providing free cribs to families that cannot afford one) Lewis County Vulnerable Adult Task Force Lewis County E.M.S. Council D.U.I. Victim’s Impact Panel Lewis County Traffic Safety Council

West Region EMS: Death/injury prevention programs Mock DUI presentations for local high schools

**COVID-19**

2020 was certainly a difficult year for everyone as the Covid-19 pandemic struck. Deaths related to Covid-19 that occurred in a medical facility are natural deaths and therefore did not fall within the jurisdiction of being investigated by this office. The increased need for personal protection equipment while responding to calls was challenging. We also developed the ability to test all decedents who came to our office from the field for Covid-19.

**JURISDICTION**

Lewis County is approximately 2, 436 square miles but that area increases to 2, 800 square when you include the Forest Service and other non-county maintained roads. The county populations is approximately 80, 000[[1]](#footnote-1).

Cities/Communities served: (Incorporated and unincorporated communities) Adna Boistfort Centralia Chehalis Cinebar Curtis Doty/Driad Ethel Evaline Forest Galvin Glenoma Mary’s Coroner Mineral Morton Mossyrock Napavine Onalaska Packwood Randle Salkum Silver Creek Toledo Vader White Pass Winlock

The LCCO works with many agencies including:

Lewis County Prosecutor’s Office

Lewis County Public Health

Cascade Mental Health

Human Response Network

WA Labor & Industries

WA DSHS (CPS/APS)

Federal Aviation Administration

US Consumer Product Protection Commission

Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA)

BNSF Railroad

Amtrak

There are two hospitals in out jurisdiction: Providence Centralia Hospital Morton General Hospital

The LCCO conducts parallel/independent death investigations with all of the law enforcement agencies in the county:

Centralia PD

Chehalis PD

Chehalis Tribal PD

Cowlitz Tribal PD

Lewis County Sheriff’s Office

Morton/Mossyrock PD

Napavine PD

National Park Service Police

Pe Ell Marshals

Toledo PD

Washington State Patrol

**STATISTICS**

The annual statistics listed below will not reflect the various types of deaths under each category. For example suicides by gunshots, hanging, etc. are not listed as there are cases that can involve circumstances unique to a specific case. By listing the circumstance of that one case could cause unnecessary emotional trauma to surviving family members and friends.

The LCCO also draws a case number for situations involving assistance to other agencies, or departments or the public. For example if a Lewis County law enforcement agency requires assistance from this office, determining if bones are human is the number one, the category is called Department Assist.

If a Lewis County non-law enforcement agency or an agency outside the county requests assistance the category is Agency Assist. This usually entails cremated remains being found or an outside county requesting to use our facility for an autopsy since they do not have the facilities to do one there.

The last category is public assist and this where members of the public ask for assistance from the LCCO most often it involves finding cremated remains in a house/property.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Total cases | Natural | Homicide | Suicide | Accidental | Undetermined | Dept.  Assist | Public  Assist |
| 874 |  | 3 | 18 | 43 | 8 | 10 | 1 |

Case type

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Coroner cases | NJAs | Transported by  Contract Mortuary | Exhumations |
|  |  |  | 0 |

Examinations

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| External | Full autopsies | Toxicology |
|  | 63 | 179 |

Additional

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Unidentified decedents | Tissue donations |
| 0 | 9 |

1. <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/lewiscountywashington,WA/PST045219> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)