

Spartanburg County Coroner



Coroner
Rusty Clevenger

2024 Annual Report

Spartanburg County Coroner's Office
366 North Church Street
Spartanburg, 29303

Last Revised: June 24, 2025

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Message to the County Council, administration, and Citizens of Spartanburg County

The Spartanburg County Coroner's Office investigates sudden, violent, unexpected, and suspicious deaths that occur in Spartanburg County. The Office of the Coroner certifies death after investigation and postmortem examination and completes the medical section of the death certificate as required by law. Complete findings of the death investigation are distributed to the legal next of kin and law enforcement agencies as appropriate. The Spartanburg County Coroner's Office only performs forensic autopsies and do not performed autopsies for medical curiosity.

The main duties of the Office of the Coroner's Office are to determine the cause and manner of death, and certify deaths that are reported to the Coroner. The cause of death is the disease process or injury that resulted in death. There are thousands of diseases and injuries that may result in death. The manner of death is a classification in which a determination is made regarding whether the death resulted from natural causes, homicide, suicide, or an accident. On occasion, the manner of death is classified as undetermined.

Information collected during the investigation helps clarify the circumstances, such as the sequence of events prior to death. Evidence collected during an investigation and/or postmortem examination may help lead to the arrest or successful conviction of a suspect in a homicide case. Because deaths occur around the clock, Coroner's Office staff members are available 24 hours a day, 365 days per year.

With the skill and experience of the Coroner's investigators and board-certified forensic pathologists, we believe the quality of death investigations in Spartanburg County are among the best in the State. The death scene investigation reports filed by the investigators are very thorough and supply comprehensive information to the board-certified forensic pathologists.

Our Coroner and investigators also extend their duties to the living by answering questions and addressing concerns regarding deaths within the county. Coroner investigators frequently make personal contact with family members of a deceased and assist them by providing appropriate answers regarding the circumstances of the death. Coroner's investigators are supplied with a pamphlet for distribution to families. The information provides answers to common questions and facts about autopsies and also provides resource information pertaining to grief counseling.

In 2023 the coroner's office identified an extremely high number of motor vehicle fatalities within Spartanburg County. Due to this, the coroner's office immediately began to work with local and state law enforcement to help identify the causes of these motor vehicle collisions. As we studied these efforts, we stepped outside the norm of the coroner's office and applied for federal grant monies through the National Highway Safety Institute, sponsored by South Carolina Department of Public Safety. Through these funds the Spartanburg County Coroner's Office was able to obtain grant monies to purchase a impaired / distracted driving vehicle and fund the salary of a part time employee to get involved in driver education programs for our local school districts and the community. The finalization of this project was completed in December of 2024. The coroner's office further showed extreme interest in child fatalities that were occurring in Spartanburg County. With this, the Spartanburg County Coroner's Office was selected by the State of South Carolina as a pilot program, paid for by the State of South Carolina, to hire a full time child fatality investigator, to handle statistical data entry and identify causes of death within Spartanburg County. The Spartanburg County Coroner's Office was re-accredited in 2024 with the International Association of Coroner and Medical Examiners and was the first agency in the nation to get the accreditation under the new standards.

The Coroner and staff continually works with state and federal law enforcement and law makers in collaboration with the South Carolina Coroner's Association to continue reducing numbers of drug related

deaths to include fentanyl. As the the fentanyl epidemic struck South Carolina, the Spartanburg County Coroner's office continued to work with law makers to find a resolution to curve this problem. As a result of law enforcements continuing efforts, the numbers of Fentanyl overdose deaths has dropped from 122 reported deaths in Spartanburg County for 2023 to 44 reported deaths in 2024.

The Spartanburg County Coroner and His Chief Investigator started in 2022 working diligently with the South Carolina Coroner's Association, SC Department of Public Health, SLED, and SC Upstate Health Care Coalition to incorporate a state wide mass fatality response team, due the state of South Carolina not having this ability and the federal government not providing the services as often. This team was made official in 2024 and is known as MAST (Mortuary Assistant Strike Team). This teams is set up in 4 regions through the state and is to be utilized in the event of a mass fatality to assist with less strain on each regions assets and man power. This program has been funded through state and federal grants. Spartanburg County Coroner Rusty Clevenger has been assigned as the Statewide commander and his Chief has been assigned as the commander for the upstate team.

We extend our sincere gratitude to the Spartanburg County Administration and Council members for their support of the coroner's office program and the services we provide to the citizens of the Spartanburg County.

Coroner's Office Staff

Rusty Clevenger
Coroner

Jonathan Lawson
Chief Investigator

Jessica Ervin
Assistant Chief Investigator

Anna Fowler
Coroner's Investigator

Dennis Brown
Coroner's Investigator

Kacie Brown
Coroner's Investigator

Jeff Greenway
Coroner Investigator
Skylar Henderson
Coroner's Investigator

Haleigh Trammell
Coroner's Investigator

Michelle Lewis
Indigent Care Investigator

Holly Crooke
Office Administrator

Tonya Anderson
Pathology Assistant / Admin Assistant

Michael Ward
Chief Medical Examiner

John Wassum
Deputy Medical Examiner

Claire Rose
Deputy Medical Examiner

Grace Dukes
Deputy Medical Examiner
Kelly Byrd
Child Fatality Investigator

Rick Ellis
Cold Case Investigator

Ellen Holmes
Part time Investigator
Judy Yacoviello
Part time Investigator

Ronnie Blackwell
Evidence Technician

Christen Hall
Case Manager

Dot Trent
Administrative Assistant

David Marthers
Driver Education Instructor

Types of Deaths Reportable to the Coroner's Office

Deaths Reportable to the Coroner's:

- Violent death (e.g., strangulation, gunshot, stabbing, poisoning, etc.)
- Accidental deaths (e.g., falls, drowning, motor vehicle collisions, burns, overdose, etc.)
- Death of a prisoner (e.g., deaths in any county or city jail while imprisoned or in custody).
- Suspicious Circumstances (e.g., Unidentified Bodies or events surrounding death)
- Sudden and Unexpected deaths (e.g., all deaths during a surgical procedure, in recovery,
- Methadone Clinic Patients
- anesthesia-related, unexpected natural death, occupational-related deaths)*
- Without medical attendance within 48 hours of death:
- In cases of chronic illness, the attending physician may sign the death certificate if she/he can be reasonably certain of the cause of death.
- Death of a mother due to an abortion.
- Unexpected infant deaths

The Coroner would generally order an autopsy for any of the reportable deaths listed above.

Spartanburg County Coroner's Cases

Population	356,698
Cases Reported to Medical Examiner	3601
A. Number of deaths certified after postmortem examination	377
1. Number of Coroner Cases with Complete Autopsy	212
2. Number of Coroner's Cases with External Examination	149
3. Number of Coroner's Cases with Limited Examination	22
B. Number of deaths certified without postmortem examination	810
C. Number of deaths certified by Coroner's Office after investigation	2791

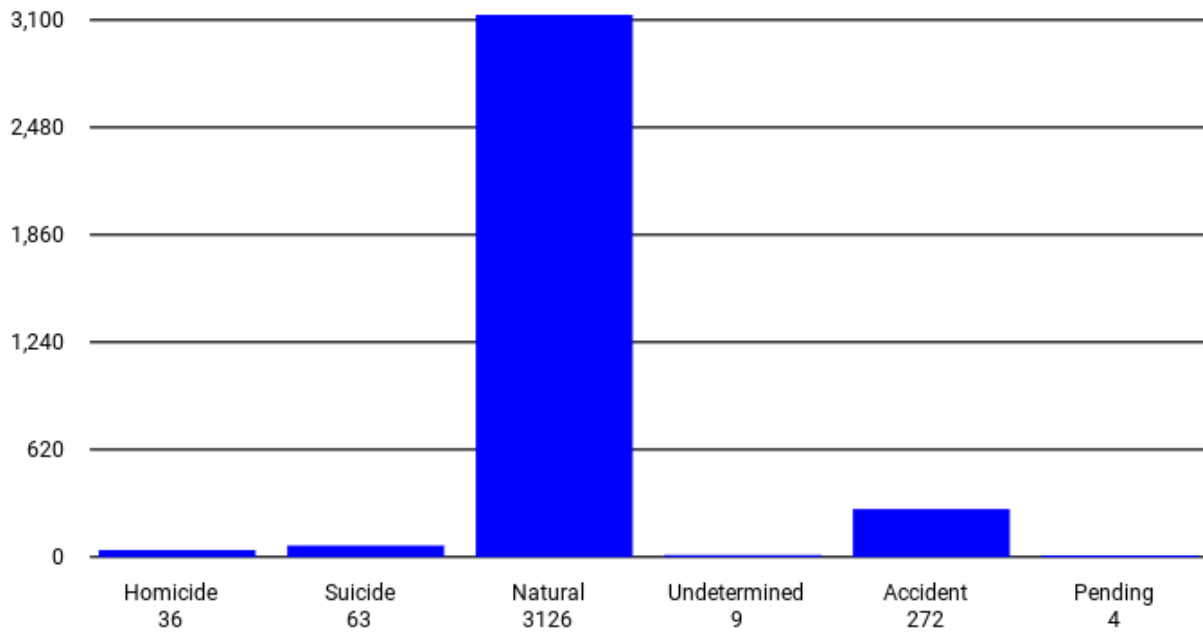
Definitions

Full Autopsy: A complete external and internal examination of a decedent

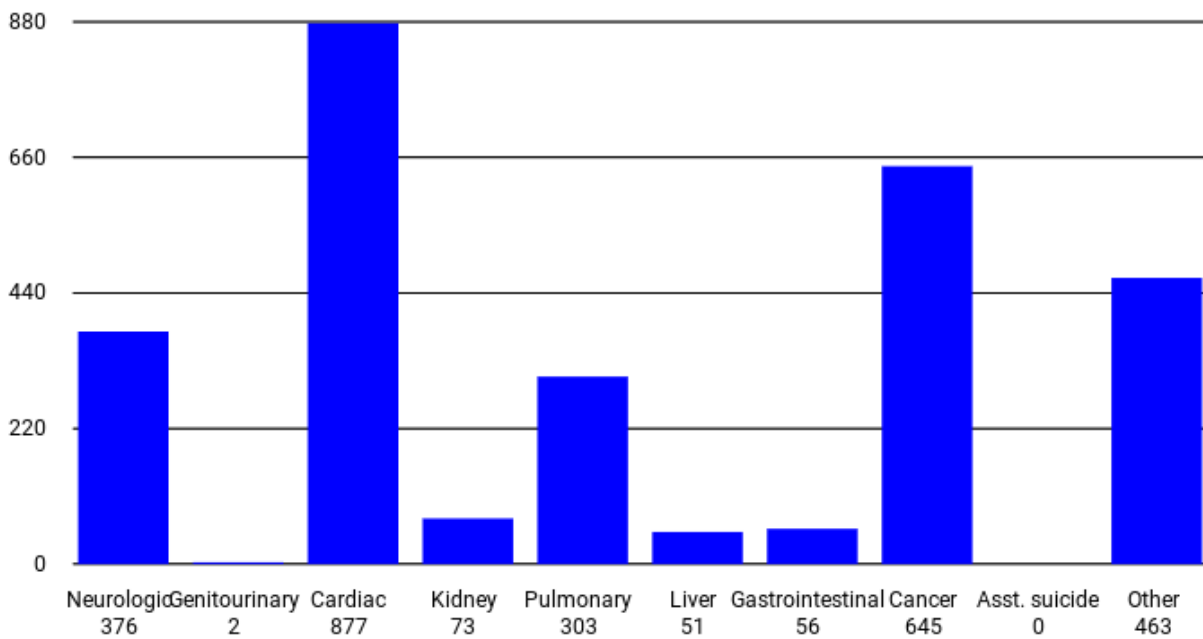
Limited Examination: An examination which is focused on a specific organ or region of the body, i.e., heart. The limited examination also includes an external examination.

External Examination: An examination of the exterior of a decedent.

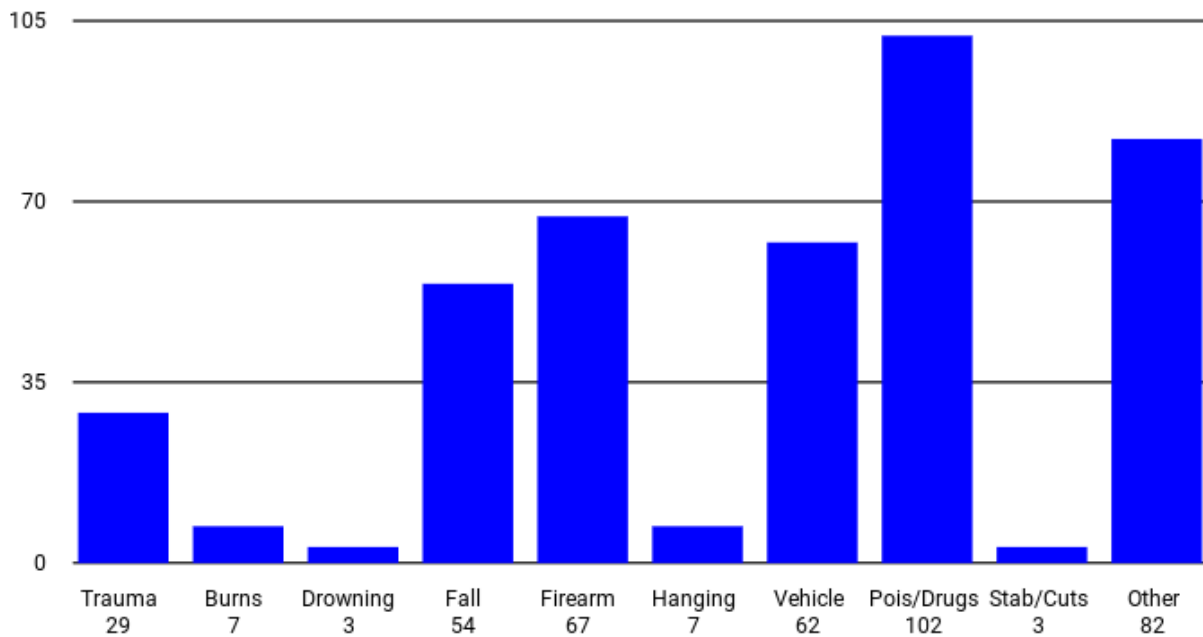
Manner of Death by Postmortem Examination



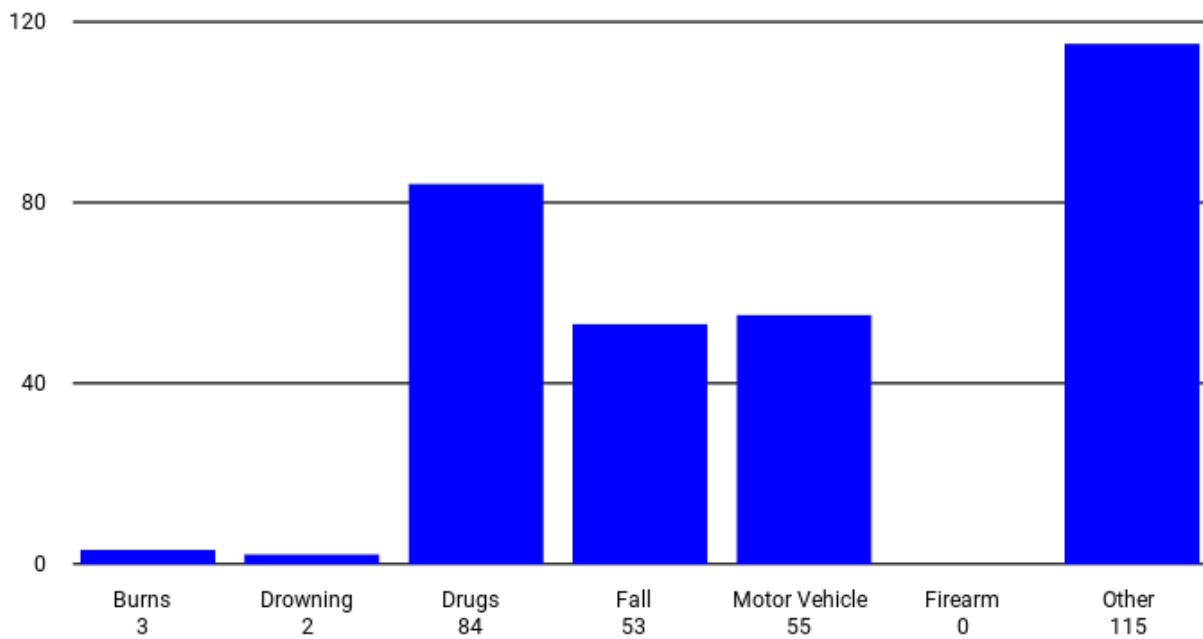
Deaths by Natural Causes



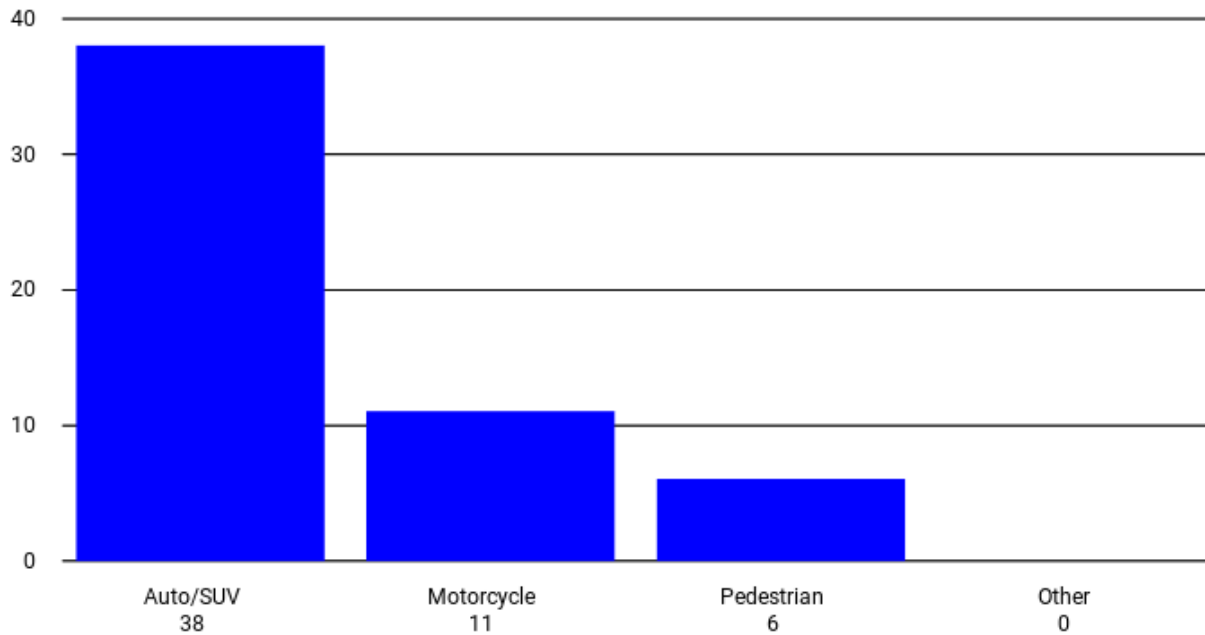
Deaths by Unnatural Causes



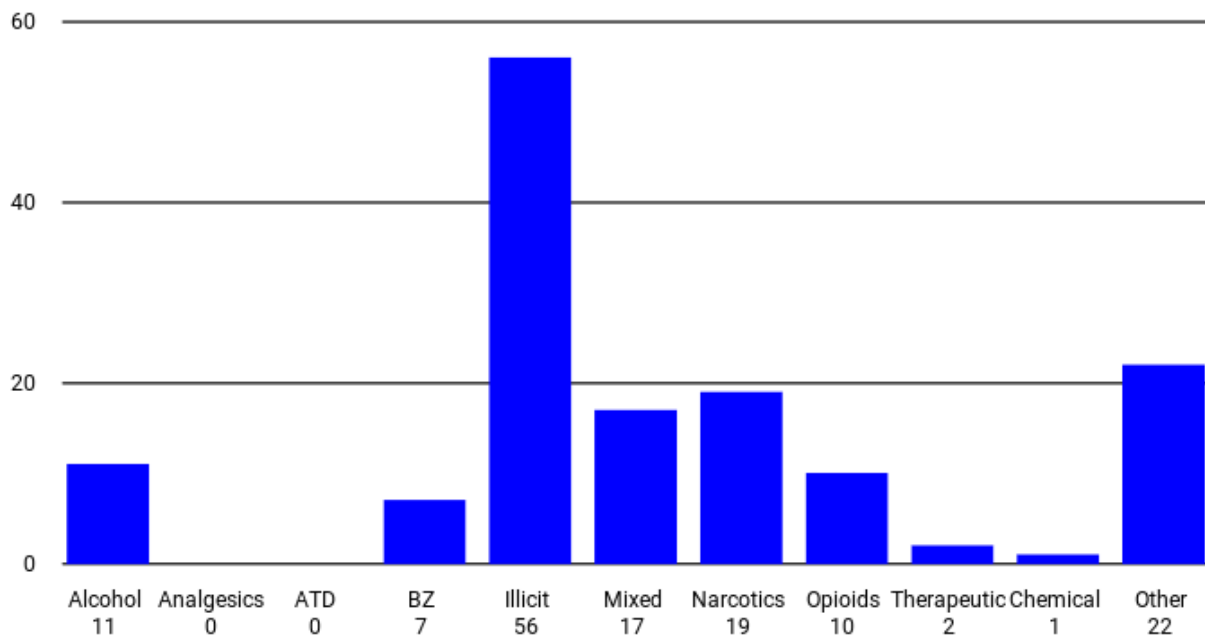
Accidental Deaths by Type



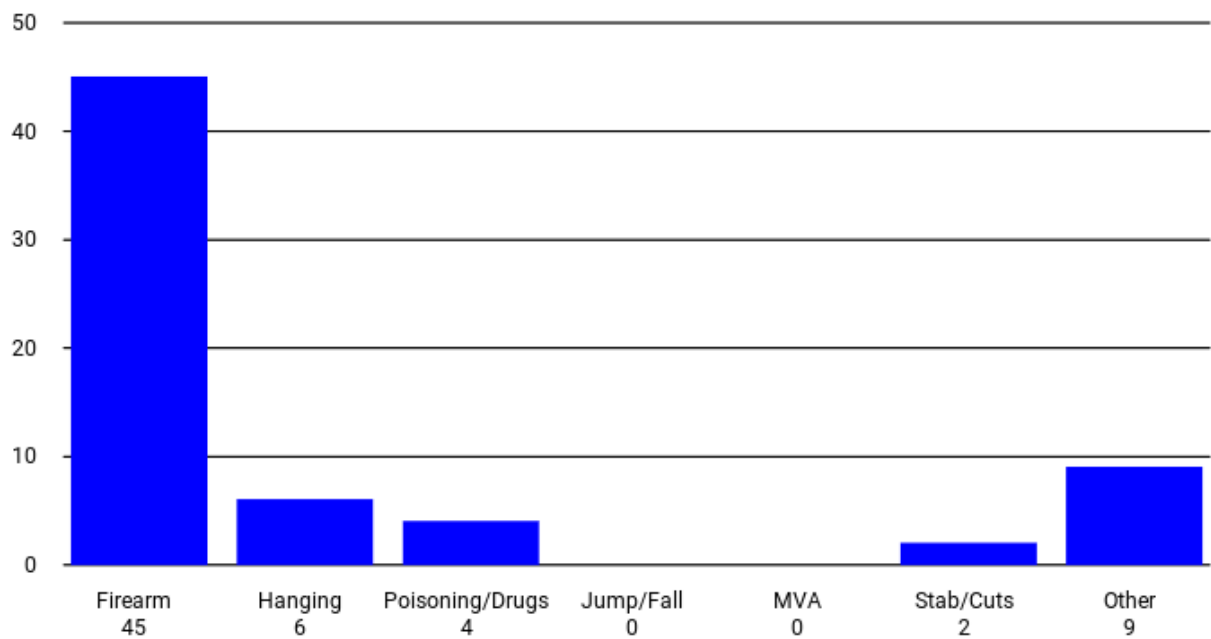
Accidental Deaths - Motor Vehicle Crashes



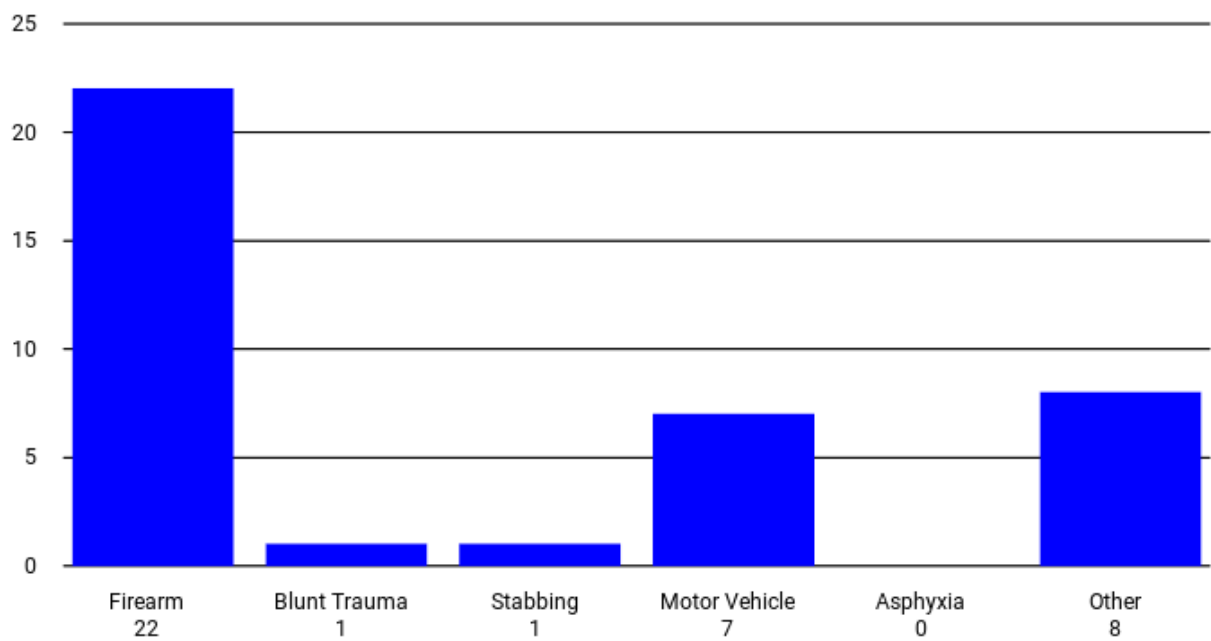
Drugs Contributing to Cause of Death



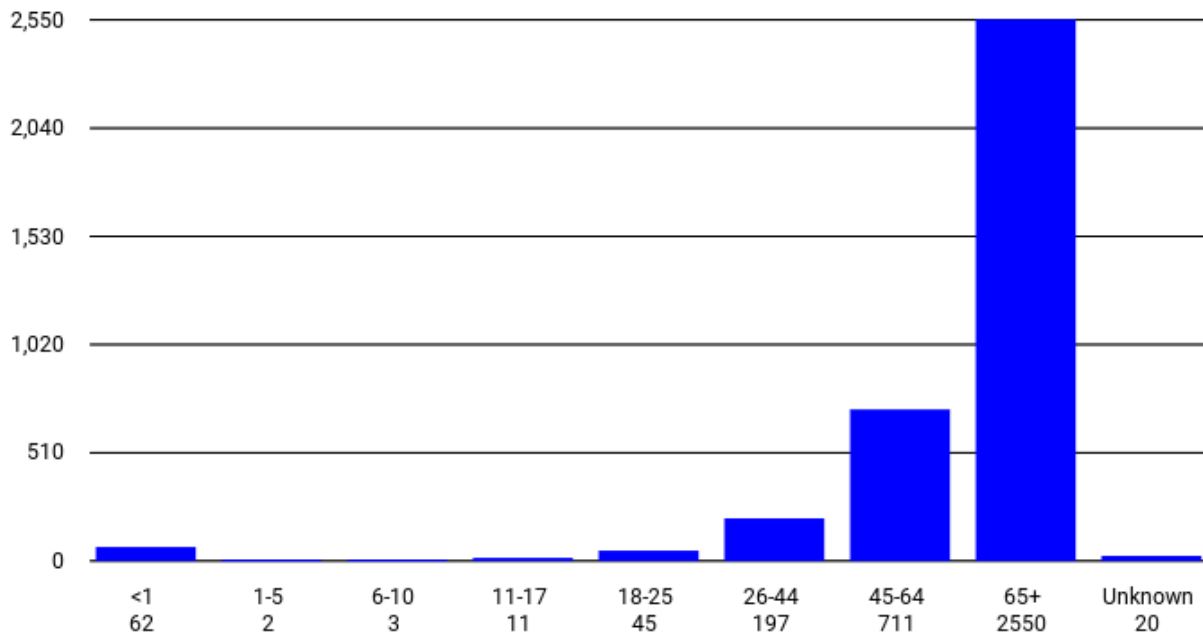
Suicide by Means



Homicide Deaths



Deaths by Age Group



Spartanburg County Coroner's Office Annual Budget 2024

Salaries - \$850,418.00 - Salaries for all coroner's office employees except part time (PRN) investigators

Part Time Pool - \$17,000.00 - Salaries for PRN Investigators

Overtime - \$148,000.00 - Total amount of overtime cost for on call investigators

FICA - \$74,924.00

SC Retirement - \$46,015.00

Police Retirement - \$163,329.00

Group Insurance - \$ 130,243.00

Workers Compensation - \$6,504.00

Professional Dues - \$5,810.00 - Accreditation fees, certification memberships

Subscriptions and Publications - \$4,570.00 - publications utilized for indigent care services

Software - \$2,070.00 - misc. software for computer programs

Mileage - \$7,000.00 - Paid to investigators or coroner's employees when having to utilize their personal vehicles for county related business

Training - \$14,800.00 - annual training classes for coroner's office employees, this also pays for lodging and per diem for out of town training

Recruitment - \$3,500.00 - utilized to pay for psychological evaluations on new hires, further utilized for items to promote employment

Clothing Allowance - \$870.00 - Clothing allowance for coroner to purchase business attire

Uniforms - \$12,200.00 - Uniforms for investigative staff. This includes, belts, boots, ballistic vest, pants, shirts, jackets

Office Supplies - \$14,798.93 - everyday office supplies for coroner's office personnel
Copier Charges - \$300.00 - for specialized coping of documents
Professional Services - \$0.00
Regulatory Monitoring - \$0.00
Vehicle Labor - \$13,500.00 - cost for vehicle repairs and services through the Spartanburg County Fleet Services department
Vehicle Parts - \$16,500.00 - Cost for replacement parts such as tires, filters, brakes, or damaged vehicle components
Vehicle Fuel - \$33,027.00 - vehicle fuel for all county owned vehicles that are assigned to the coroner's office
Communications - \$20,340.00 - Cell phone cost along with wireless internet services
Electricity - \$400.00 - off site electricity for mass fatality equipment, to keep items read to go in the need of an incident
Special Projects - \$0.00
Post Mortem Costs - \$729,592.45 - cost for autopsy services, toxicology service, pathology services, morgue usage
Grant Operating - \$0.00
Furnishings - \$5,969.49 - cost to replace old or damage desk, chairs, and other furniture
Technology - \$1,780.00 - used to assist with purchasing related items to existing equipment
Vehicles - \$0.00
Buildings & Renovations - \$0.00

Total Budget - \$ 2,349,517.16
Budget Money not used - \$10,270.50
Actual Budget Money Spent - \$2,339,246.66