The work of the Department of the Medical Examiner is largely based on Government Code § 27491, which states that all unnatural deaths including homicides, suicides, accidents, and deaths in custody are under the coroner/medical examiner’s jurisdiction to investigate. Also falling under our jurisdiction are infectious diseases reaching epidemic proportions, deaths in state or local institutions, and deaths believed to be natural but that occurred suddenly and unexpectedly where the decedent had not seen their health care provider in the last 20 days of life. Note: All deaths that fall under § 27491 are also subject to whether the facts indicate the death occurred under natural circumstances and the physician of record has sufficient knowledge to reasonably state the cause of death occurred under natural circumstance. Therefore, not every death that falls under one of these categories will be investigated by the Medical Examiner’s office.

Due to some cases still under investigation within the quarter, manner of death counts and associated insights may adjust slightly as those cases are closed.

Unintentional Drug and Medication related deaths remained high, representing 37% of all accidental deaths in Q1 of 2019; Falls accounted for 33% and Motor Vehicle related accidental deaths were at 18% during the quarter.

Accidents
- Unintentional deaths due to drug, medication, and/or alcohol toxicity increased by 3% in Q1 of 2019 compared to the same time period in 2018 (153 to 157)
- Methamphetamine was a causative factor in 59% of all overdose cases and saw a 26% increase in Q1 of 2019 compared to 2018
- Deaths where Fentanyl was a causative factor increased by nearly 12% (26 to 29)

Homicides
- In Quarter 1 of 2019, there was a 16% increase in suicides compared to Quarter 1 of 2018
- During this time period, firearms continued to be the leading method of suicide, accounting for 38% of all such cases, followed by Asphyxiation at 30%
- There were 7 Coronado Bridge deaths in Quarter 1 of 2019 compared to 4 in 2018

Suicides
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