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NEWS

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Release of 2012 Orange County Coroner Report

SANTA ANA, California - (September 12, 2013) – The Orange County Coroner Division of the Orange County Sheriff's Department has released the 2012 Coroner Report. The report is designed to provide an overview of victim characteristics, frequency, cause and location of deaths in Orange County.

Under California law, Government Code 27491, deaths of sudden and unexpected nature and those related to any type of injury or intoxications must be reported to the Coroner.

In 2012, there were 18,915 deaths in Orange County. Of those, the Coroner Division investigated 5,093 deaths and performed a total of 1,654 autopsies to assist in the determination of the cause and manner of death. In cases investigated by the Coroner, the breakdown in manner of death is as follows: 84% natural; 10% accident (traffic, mechanical falls, drug overdoses, drowning, etc.); 4% suicide; 1% homicide; and 1% undetermined (i.e., the investigation could not determine cause and/or manner).

Accidents, suicides, and homicides account for 15% of deaths countywide. The use of firearms continues to be the most common means of suicide and homicide in the county with hanging as a secondary means of suicide. Generally, males between the ages of 40 to 60 have the greatest number of suicides with the secondary age range being 20 to 29.

Last year, 330 individuals died as a direct result of overdoses involving illicit drugs and/or prescription medication use. Of significant note, prescription overdoses outnumber illicit drug overdoses by roughly a three to one margin. This is in stark contrast to overdose statistics from 1999. Over a 13-year period, the County saw a 50% decrease in deaths attributed to illicit drugs. In that same period, deaths attributed to prescription medication use, either in whole or in part, increased by 143%.

Deaths by accidental drowning continue to spike during the summer months. A total of 46 deaths by drowning occurred in 2012. In addition, unsafe sleeping practices involving infant children continue to account for an average six deaths each year.

The complete 2012 Coroner Report can be accessed online by the public on the Sheriff's Department's website at http://ocsd.org/divisions/prof/coroner/stats.