

## Fall “specificity” needed on death records

MINNESOTA DEATHS DUE TO FALLS ARE RISING. MORE INFORMATION IS NEEDED TO UNDERSTAND AND PREVENT DEATH-RELATED FALLS.

### Medical Examiners and Coroners are in a position to improve the quality of data on Minnesota death records.

The rate of fatal falls in Minnesota is climbing faster than in the U.S. as a whole. Since 2000, the rate doubled. And, in 2013, for the first time, the age-adjusted rate in Minnesota was double that of the U.S. and nearly four times the lowest state.

According to experts in injury and violence prevention, the wide difference in fall mortality between Minnesota and other states is likely due to how states collect and report data on falls.



Further, preliminary data for 2016 from the CDC’s National Center for Health Statistics shows that Minnesota is now fourth in the U.S. for deaths due to unspecified falls.

Any cause of death needs to be reported as specifically and as precisely as possible. Death records listing fall as the cause or a contributing factor are referred to medical examiners for review. Coroners and Medical Examiners are uniquely positioned to influence better reporting for both unintentional injuries and for the cause of death where falls are a factor.

The National Center for Health Statistics categorizes falls for coding deaths.

- Details about slipping, tripping, and stumbling helps code deaths correctly.
- Codes assigned to falls include:
  - W00-due to ice and snow, same level
  - W01-same level slip, trip, stumble
  - W02-ice or roller skates, skis, skateboards
  - W03-same level collision with another
  - W04-while carried or supported by others
  - W05-non-moving wheelchair, scooter
  - W06-from bed
  - W07-from chair
  - W08-from other furniture
  - W09-on and from playground equipment
  - W10-on and from stairs and steps
  - W11-on and from ladder
  - W12-on and from scaffolding
  - W13-from/out/through building/structure
  - W14-from tree
  - W15-from cliff
  - W16-fall or jump or diving into water
  - W17-from one level to another
  - W18-other slip, trip, stumble falls
  - W19-UNSPECIFIED FALL

Specify the type and circumstances of every fall. Data about fall-related deaths can help prevent falls and unintentional injuries.

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