

# CORONER OF WAYNE COUNTY

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**EDWARD R. HOWELL**

EDWARD R. HOWELL  
*Coroner*

CAROL R. LIENERT  
*Deputy & Coroner Emeritus*

ROBERT MORCOM  
*Deputy*



MARK M. JAMES  
*Chief Deputy*

LAURA WALKER-SWINGLE  
*Deputy & Death Investigation Supervisor*

ETTA DAY  
*Deputy*

April 20, 2020

SUBJECT: COVID-19 CORONER UPDATE

**As the COVID-19 pandemic continues to unfold, the staff in the Office of the Coroner remains on the front lines as we work to make accurate determinations of deaths in this county. As the public monitors the statistics published daily by the Department of Health, this office receives requests for more specific information. This update is purposed to clarify the statistics, shed public light on our circumstances, and provide accurate data to our county residents:**

The numbers published by the DOH reflect the “county of residence” of the person who has died.

The Coroner’s Office investigates deaths that occur within the physical jurisdiction of Wayne County.

Currently, the Department of Health reports 3 deaths for Wayne County. This number reflects the lives lost of individuals who claimed their residence as Wayne County. These individuals may have died out-of-state or even-out-of-country. This office does not have the ability to monitor or track deaths that occur outside of Wayne County. Therefore, the numbers provided by the DOH do not represent the numbers provided by this office.

This office has tested multiple decedents who were either symptomatic or suspect for COVID-19 around the date of death. This testing is performed directly by me and my staff. We utilize PPE including full body barrier suits, shoe covers, masks, and gloves, etc. For each death investigation, we enter the scene of the death and become potentially exposed to the very fatal virus that may have taken the life of the one we are advocating for.

The Coroner’s Office employs one full-time Deputy/Death Investigation Supervisor in addition to me. We have four per-diem deputies who are compensated for the work they perform, only when they work. Some are paid a stipend to be on-call and response ready. These employees do not receive any benefits nor do they receive a retirement pension like most other county departments. While some county departments have been deemed “Emergency Responders” and are receiving “hazard pay,” the staff of the Coroner’s office is not included in these designations. I cannot begin to express my heartfelt gratitude for the highly trained and professional



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deputies in my office. While many professionals working in a per-diem capacity could simply decline working in these dangerous circumstances, these professionals have taken measures to put themselves at risk, to serve county government, and our communities at large. I cannot thank them enough.

We extend our heartfelt condolences to the families who have been so tragically affected by this virus. We express our gratitude to Wayne Memorial Hospital and the various medical facilities and providers for working with us to provide accurate information as we investigate these deaths.

It is my desire that the public is aware of the important and highly specialized work this office performs. We will continue to support one another and never give up on investigating all of the facts and circumstances surrounding deaths in this great county.

<b>COVID-19 Wayne County Coroner Death Data (COVID-19 DEATHS OCCURRING IN WAYNE COUNTY)</b>					
<b>Date of Death</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Race</b>	<b>Wayne County Location of Death</b>	<b>County of Residence</b>
April 5, 2020	57	Female	White	Hospital	Pike
April 5, 2020	63	Female	White	Hospital	Pike
April 14, 2020	65	Male	White	Hospital	Wayne
April 14, 2020	75	Female	White	Hospital	Pike
					Total: 4 Cases

Total Cases Investigated in 2020 to Date:

128 Death Investigations

Sincerely,

Edward R. Howell  
Wayne County Coroner

