

# Hardin County Government Coroner's Staff Earns the Highest Certification

July 2017



Harry L. Berry  
Judge/Executive

Pictured standing (left to right) Barry Brown, John Clemens, Pat Elmore, Dr. Bill Lee, Kenneth (Spanky) Spangenberg. Sitting is Shana Norton.

Coroner Dr. Bill Lee



Coroner Dr. Bill Lee is very proud of his staff of five Deputy Coroners for achieving the Commonwealth of Kentucky's Master Coroner Certification. No other Kentucky county can claim its entire staff are Master Coroners. This level of professional achievement is based on years of experience, in-service classes, and membership in the Coroner's Association. Hardin County is well-respected throughout the Commonwealth for its Coroner's Office. The Coroner's staff is a group of dedicated, compassionate people with the ability to work well with all types of people under intense and trying circumstances.

The combined experience of the staff totals 145 years with a high of 34 years to a low of 14 years. The experience level is critical when dealing with high emotions, legal situations within the Criminal Justice System, long night hours, extreme weather conditions, dangerous bio-hazardous situations, and locating and notifying the next of kin.

In 2016, our Coroner's Office investigated 704 deaths, a 3.6% increase from 2015. The majority of cases (85%) were County residents but 15% had residencies outside the county. The interstate highways and our regional hospital are a major reason for non-resident deaths within our county.

While 91% of the death investigations in 2016 were determined to be natural, 5% were accidental, 1% resulted from homicide, 2% from suicide, and 1% undetermined. Accidental deaths increased by 25% in 2016 over 2015. Of those accidental deaths, drug overdoses were responsible for 50%. All age groups are represented in this statistic, but 32-39 and 50-58 seem to be the most vulnerable groups. The white population accounts for 95.5% of drug-related deaths with the hispanic population accounting for the remaining 4.5%.

Hardin County is very fortunate to have him as our County Coroner for the last 30 years. Dr. Lee is known for his kindness as well as his exemplary work especially in the area of forensic odontology. His reputation has grown throughout the Commonwealth. He received the State Medical Examiner's prestigious "L.C. McCloud Award" in 2010. In 2013, he was elected to serve as the President of the Kentucky Coroner's Association. He volunteers to assist in numerous disasters including the deadly crash at Lexington's Bluegrass Airport, the Katrina storm disaster on the Gulf Coast, and the earthquakes in Haiti.