ARREST RELATED DEATHS IN NEVADA, 2009-11

By Timothy C. Hart, Ph.D., Kiera Flynn, and Colleen Savage

For nearly a decade, the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS), through the Deaths in Custody Reporting Program (DCRP) (PL 106-297), has collected inmate death records from each of the nation’s 50 state prison systems, 50 state juvenile correctional authorities, and from local jails throughout the country.

In 2003, BJS began collecting arrest-related deaths data from state and local law enforcement agencies as a part of the DCRP. Since the initial data collection year, law enforcement agencies in Nevada have not provided BJS with arrest-related deaths in custody information and are under no obligation to do so.

In 2009, funding from the State Justice Statistics Program (award #2009-BJ-CX-K035), administered by BJS, was used by the Center for the Analysis of Crime Statistics (CACS) to develop and implement a statewide online data collection instrument. This survey tool offers local law enforcement agencies throughout Nevada a quick and easy way provide arrest-related deaths in custody information that can be included in the DCRP. In 2011, 51 of Nevada’s 53 agencies (96%) participated in the project.

This State Data Brief presents details related to the arrests-related deaths that occurred in Nevada from 2009 through 2011 and that were reported to CACS. The report includes information on when incidents occurred, demographic information of the suspects, the cause and manner of the reported deaths, the mental/physical condition of suspects at the time of the incidents, the locations of the deaths, and whether suspects were armed.

This report includes information on incidents that met certain criteria for inclusion. Detailed information on those incidents that were included and excluded from this study are presented in the Methodology section. The opinions, findings, conclusions or recommendations expressed in this report are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of BJS.

ARREST-RELATED DEATHS, 2009-11

From 2009 through 2011, state and local law enforcement agencies in Nevada identified 33 incidents that involved a suspect who died during the course of an arrest. The number of arrest-related deaths in Nevada has increased from 8 incidents in 2009 to 13 incidents in 2011, which is a 62% increase over three years. Detailed demographic information about decedents is summarized in Table 1.
Arrest-related deaths incidents that took place in Nevada between 2009 and 2011 and that were reported to CACS most often involved an individual who was male (94%), White, non-Hispanic (42%), and who was between 36 and 50 years of age (39%).

Manner and Medical Cause of Death

Information on the manner and medical cause of death was provided to CACS by each law enforcement agency reporting an arrest-related death in Nevada. This information is presented in Table 2. Nearly all arrest-related deaths that occurred between 2009 and 2011 and that were reported to CACS were classified by law enforcement agencies as a “homicide by law enforcement officer(s).”

Unlike the manner of death, the medical cause of death varied across incident. For example, while most suspects’ medical cause of death was determined to be the result of a gunshot(s) wound (82%), other suspects died from cocaine/ethanol intoxication (6%) or from hanging (3%)

Offense(s) Committed by Deceased

Information on the type of offense(s) committed by individuals who died during the course of an arrest was also requested from Nevada’s agencies that participated in the CACS data collection project. The most serious offense committed by decedents is provided in Table 3.

Analysis of these data indicates that nearly a quarter of all individuals who died during an arrest would have been charged with attempted murder. About 1-in-5 would have been charged with assault with a deadly weapon, and 18% would have been charged with a battery/domestic violence. One decedent would have been charged with arson, while another would have been charged with jaywalking.

Condition and Location of Deceased

Information concerning the deceased’s mental and physical condition was requested from the agencies that provided CACS with arrest-related death data. Among the types of conditions reported, most individuals (46%) who died during an arrest in Nevada resisted arrest or being handcuffed and about 3-in-10 attempted to escape (Table 4). One-third of decedents appeared intoxicated or exhibited mental health problems. Seventy percent of decedents died at the scene.

Weapon Use

Eighty-two percent of situations involving an arrest-related death in Nevada from 2009 through 2011 involved an individual armed with a weapon (Table 5). During those situations, the weapon was used to either threaten the officer or some other person 96%
of the time. The deceased was reportedly unarmed in about one-eighth of all incidents.

From 2009 through 2011, when an individual was killed by a Nevada law enforcement officer who used equipment or a weapon, a firearm was most often the type of weapon used. A conductive energy device (i.e., a stun gun) was used relatively less often. Other "less than lethal device" was used 20% of the time.

### Methodology

Data for this report was collected by the Center for the Analysis of Crime Statistics (CACS)—the state of Nevada’s Statistical Analysis Center (SAC)—through an online reporting system funded by the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) and its State Justice Statistics (SJS) Program.

Only incidents that met specific criteria were considered an arrest-related death in custody for the purpose of this data collection effort. An incident was included as an arrest-related death in custody if it took place in 2009 and involved the death of a person in the process of arrest and who was...

- Killed by any use of force by law enforcement officers;
- In the physical custody, or under the physical restraint of law enforcement officers, even if the person was not formally under arrest at the time;
- At crime/arrest scene or medical facility prior to booking;

### Table 3. Most serious offense committed by individuals who died during an arrest in Nevada, 2009-11.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Offense charge information</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Most serious offense</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attempted murder</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>24.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arson</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assault w/ a deadly weapon</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>21.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Battery/ Domestic violence</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>18.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home invasion</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jaywalking</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resisting arrest with a weapon</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robbery</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sale of a controlled substance</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual assault on a victim &lt;14</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Warrants</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not applicable/ Missing</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Detail may not add to 100% due to rounding.

### Table 4. Mental/physical condition of the deceased and the location of the death among those who died during an arrest in Nevada, 2009-11.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Condition and location</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Did the deceased--</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appear intoxicated</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>18.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exhibit mental health problems</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>15.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verbally threaten the officer(s)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>12.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resist being cuff/ arrested</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>45.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attempt to escape</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>30.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Become physically combative</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None of the above</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Where did the deceased die?
- At medical facility
  - following clinical intervention | 8 | 24.2 |
  - At crime scene                   | 23 | 69.7 |
- DOA at medical facility            | 1  | 3.0 |
- Missing                            | 1  | 3.0 |

Note: Agencies were permitted to select more than one mental/physical condition. Detail may not add to 100% due to rounding.

### Table 5. Weapons used by and against individuals who died during an arrest in Nevada, 2009-11.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Weapon use by and against deceased</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>During the arrest process, the deceased--</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carried or possessed a weapon</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>81.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Used a weapon to threaten the officer</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>63.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Used a weapon to threaten other persons</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>33.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Used a weapon to assault the officer</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>40.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Used a weapon to assault other people</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>11.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None of the above</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did not carry a weapon</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>12.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Equipment/weapon used against deceased
- Used something anytime during the arrest process | 25 | 75.8 |
- Firearm                                        | 17 | 68.0 |
- Handcuffs                                       | 6  | 24.0 |
- Conducted energy device                        | 4  | 16.0 |
- Other "less than lethal" device                | 5  | 20.0 |
- None of the above                               | 8  | 24.2 |

Note: Agencies were permitted to select more than one type of equipment/weapon use. Detail may not add to 100% due to rounding.
• Killed in vehicular pursuit accidents during which law enforcement officers took direct action against the driver or vehicle (e.g., shooting at the suspect, forcing the vehicle off the road with an obstruction, spike strip, or the officer’s own vehicle).

• While in transit to or from law enforcement facilities; or

• While confined in lockups or booking centers (facilities from which arrestees are usually transferred within 72 hours and not held beyond arraignment).

An incident was excluded if it involved a person in the process of arrest that was...

• Confined in local jails (facilities which typically house inmates for periods beyond 72 hours after arraignment);

• Confined in State prisons, State juvenile correctional facilities, or private correctional facilities;

• Killed in the course of law enforcement activities against whom no charges were intended (e.g., innocent bystanders, hostages, law enforcement personnel).

• Who die before coming into contact with any law enforcement officers (e.g., subjects of arrest warrants who died before any arrest process began); or

• Killed in vehicular accidents during which law enforcement officers did NOT take any direct action against the driver or vehicle.

All but two agencies in Nevada provided 2009 arrest-related deaths in custody information. Selected findings summarized in this State Data Brief are based on these data and are presented as part of the CACS State Data Brief Project.
This report is part of the “Research in Brief” series produced by the Center for Crime and Justice Policy at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. The Center is housed in the Department of Criminal Justice, which is located in the Greenspun College of Urban Affairs. Research in Briefs are modeled after the Bureau of Justice Statistics’ Special Reports and Bulletins.

The Briefs provide summaries of various criminal justice system practices in Nevada over time, and highlight differences between Nevada and other states. These reports cover all aspects of the criminal justice system, including trends in crime and arrests, police practices, prosecution, pretrial activities, adjudication, sentencing, and corrections. Although Research in Briefs typically focus on criminal justice issues within Nevada, these reports may focus on national issues as well.

Research in Briefs are designed to provide members of the general public, local officials, community organizations, and media outlets a concise and objective profile of current crime and criminal trends in Nevada and elsewhere. These briefs may serve as a foundation for informed discussions of future crime control policies and practices.

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- Arrest-Related Deaths in Nevada, 2009-2011
- Arson Trends in Nevada, 1997-2006
- Auto Theft in Nevada, 1994-2008
- Capital Punishment in Nevada, 1977-2008
- Clearance Rates in Nevada, 1998-2009
- Communication Intercepts Authorized in Nevada, 1997-2008
- Comparison of Different On-Line sampling Approaches for Generating National Samples
- Deaths in Custody in Nevada, 2001-2006
- Impact of Foreclosures on Neighborhood Crime in Nevada, 2006-2009
- Justice Assistance Grant (JAG) Program in Nevada, 2005-2010
- Nevada vs. U.S. Residents Attitudes Towards Surveillance Using Aerial Drones
- Patterns in School Violence in Nevada
- Public Attitudes about Aerial Drone Activities: Results of a National Survey
- Rape and other Sex Offenses in Nevada, 1990-2007

### CONTACT INFORMATION

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