



INFORMATION BULLETIN

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Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General
BC Coroners Service

Cautious optimism: illicit drug toxicity deaths down for first five months of 2019

VICTORIA – The BC Coroners Service has published updated reports on illicit drug toxicity deaths and fentanyl-detected drug deaths to the end of May 2019.

The number of illicit drug-related deaths for the first five months of 2019 shows a year-over-year decrease, with 86 and 84 illicit drug-related deaths in April and May 2019 respectively, down from 137 and 116 for the same months for 2018.

Overall, there have been 462 illicit drug toxicity deaths in the first five months of 2019, down 30% from the 2018 total (651) over the same period. The data is subject to change and totals for 2019 will likely increase as post-mortem testing results are received, but it is a sign for cautious optimism.

Key findings of these drug death reports include:

- The monthly average for illicit drug deaths for the first five months of 2019 (92 deaths/month) is down by approximately one-third from the same period in 2018 (130 deaths/month).
- More than two-thirds of the illicit-drug deaths in the first five months of 2019 involved people aged 30 to 59 years, and males account for almost four in every five of all illicit-drug deaths over the same period.
- For the first five months of 2019, almost nine in every 10 illicit drug deaths occurred inside, including more than half in private residences.
- Over the same time-period, there were 58 suspected illicit drug overdose deaths with fentanyl detected in May 2019 and 67 in April 2019.
- Carfentanil was detected in almost one-quarter (102 of 383) of the fentanyl-detected deaths in the first five months of 2019. There were 35 carfentanil-detected deaths in 2018.
- Fentanyl or its analogues were detected in approximately 83% of illicit drug deaths for the first five months of 2019 and 87% of illicit drug deaths for all of 2018. By comparison, in 2012, fentanyl was detected in only 4% of illicit drug deaths.
- No deaths have been reported at supervised consumption or drug overdose prevention sites.

Learn More:

Illicit drug overdose death report:

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/birth-adoption-death-marriage-and-divorce/deaths/coroners-service/statistical/illicit-drug.pdf>

Fentanyl-detected death report:

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/birth-adoption-death-marriage-and-divorce/deaths/coroners-service/statistical/fentanyl-detected-overdose.pdf>

Toward the Heart: www.towardtheheart.com

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