

PRESS RELEASE
MARIN COUNTY CORONER
KEN HOLMES
& BRIDGE RAIL FOUNDATION

For more information contact:

Ken Holmes 415-499-6043

kholmes@co.marin.ca.us

or

Bridge Rail Foundation

Paul Muller—415 643-9506

info@bridgerail.org

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Coroner's Office Releases Fifteen-Year Study on Bridge Suicides

A fifteen-year study released today by Marin County Coroner Ken Holmes exposes an often hidden horror in the Golden Gate Bridge suicide story—the public witnesses most of these deaths.

“Tourists, commuters, adults, children—and people working on the Bridge—report seeing over 70% of all suicides from the famous span. And that’s just people who speak with authorities, I suspect the actual number of witnesses is much greater,” said Marin Coroner Ken Holmes. “The Bridge District had cried foul when filmmaker Eric Steel recorded the deaths in 2004, yet they see little urgency in resolving this ongoing problem,” he said.

This new study expands and reinforces the observations Holmes made in 2007. Over 90% of those who die by suicide at the Gate are from Northern California, and over 80% are from the nine Bay Area counties. Among the suicides, 74% are men, and the median age is 40. Single and never married individuals comprise 56% of those who died. The racial makeup was 80% white, 10% Asian/Pacific Islander, 4% African American and 4% Hispanic. In addition, 80% of those studied had identifiable occupations, while 8% were students.

The new data are from a study Holmes released in conjunction with the Bridge Rail Foundation. These data do not include all bridge suicides, as officials in other counties investigate some deaths. Also excluded are deaths where no body is recovered.

The entire data set is available in the “Press Room” on the Bridge Rail Foundation website at <http://www.bridgerail.org/>

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The Marin Coroner's Office is responsible for determination of the cause and manner of death for individuals who die in Marin County. The office receives the bodies of most Bridge suicides after the Coast Guard recovers the remains in the Bay. Bodies that the Coast Guard does not find may subsequently wash to shore in other jurisdictions, whose authorities are then responsible for identification and determination of cause and manner of death.

The Bridge Rail Foundation is a non-profit organization dedicated to public education about the suicide problem on the Golden Gate Bridge.