



## Peoria County (IL) Coroner's Office

The Peoria County Coroner's Office serves residents of Peoria County by "providing thorough Medico-Legal death investigations in a skilled and considerate manner while providing unwavering compassion, dignity, and respect for the deceased and their families."

The full- and part-time staff at the PCCO handled 3,021 deaths and 194 autopsies for Peoria County alone last year. Forensic pathologists and technical staff at the office also provide autopsy services to nine surrounding north-central Illinois counties.

On weekdays, Coroner Jamie Harwood and his three full-time deputies handle calls from their office and morgue in a residential area of Peoria. After 6 pm, a deputy stops by the office, picks up a vehicle and telephone and returns home to provide coverage until 7 am the following day. On Saturdays and Sundays, coverage is split into 12-hour shifts, according to Bo Grandy, a part-time deputy coroner with the agency.

Grandy became familiar with Aladtec in his past service as a firefighter/paramedic with the nearby City of East Peoria, and currently uses it at the Pekin Fire Dept., where he works as a full-time firefighter/paramedic, just across the Illinois River from Peoria.

Before Aladtec, employees signed up for shifts by jotting their names on a whiteboard calendar a month in advance. Sign-ups are based on seniority. Part-time deputies get preference over full-time employees, said Grandy.

"It was not an efficient way to schedule. I was often unable to know who was working the day before or after me because I was not at the office to look at the whiteboard," he said.

Another office whiteboard was used to record full-timers' upcoming vacation days. Both were cumbersome, said Grandy.

"At the end of 2018, I approached our Coroner about going to Aladtec to ease the process. We have had great success thus far. We love the way the schedule can be accessed by anyone in



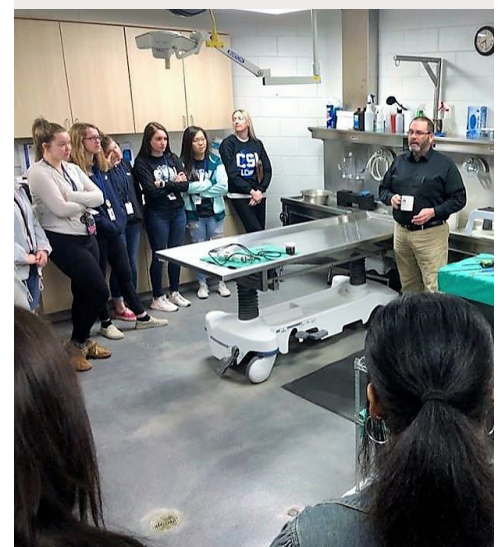
### Department Info:

**Roster:** 17 full- and part-time employees.

**Calls:** 3,021 deaths handled in 2018.

**Service area:** About 186,500 people, 631 sq. miles.

**Aladtec users since 2018.**



### Neighboring agencies also using Aladtec:

East Peoria Fire Dept., Eureka Goodfield Fire Protection District, Advanced Medical Transport, Peoria Fire Dept., OSF Life Flight Aviation, Limestone Fire Dept., Morton Fire Dept., Tazewell County Communications, Tazewell County Sheriff's Dept., Pekin Fire Dept., Roanoke Ambulance, Fulton County Emergency Medical Assoc., McLean County Communications Center, City of Lincoln City Offices and Fire Dept., Logan County Sheriff's Office, City of Lincoln Police Dept., and the LeRoy Ambulance Service.

the system anywhere at any time,” he said.

Harwood is an advocate for transparency and public education about the role of the coroner’s office. He frequently speaks at area schools and civic clubs, and welcomes groups to tour the morgue and their office facility. Aladtec helps with scheduling events and recruiting staff to assist.

An old English adage declares --”Death keeps no calendar”. Accordingly, Peoria County deputy coroners are always on the go.

Grandy said deputies respond to “any motor vehicle death, and any death in a residence, with the only exception being when a hospice provider is present, and any death in a medical facility that’s unexpected. And there are three hospitals in our county and (we attend) any deaths that occur in the ER. We do the removals ourselves. We have two vehicles -- an F150 with a custom topper and a van.”

The Coroner’s Creed and the Coroner’s Act establishes questions that must be answered to fulfill the requirements of each investigation. Who, how, where, when, and why -- meaning, what are the facts concerning the decedent’s death? Through investigation and the findings of the autopsy and/or toxicology results, deputies are usually able to determine the cause and manner of death.

“We seek to provide advocacy for families and justice for the deceased; our goal is to do these tasks in the most efficient manner possible,” Harwood notes on the website.

Grandy has created several forms in Aladtec to streamline the reporting process.

“We utilize forms to submit on-call hours, inventory our vehicles daily, gather evidence, and receive physician signatures for death certificates,” he said in an e-mail exchange.

Shortly after subscribing to Aladtec, Grandy convinced Harwood to purchase a Toughbook computer for deputy use.

“We had iPads before, but we didn’t do any charting on the go,” said Grandy. “I suggested a Toughbook, like we have in the ambulance or fire truck, for accessing our charts.” The agency uses software named Forensic Filer, a case management program, to gather, analyze, and report case information. They can also use the Toughbook and iPads to access Grandy’s forms in Aladtec.

A press release Harwood posted recently called attention to three coroner cases within two weeks caused by drug overdoses.

During investigations, deputies examine prescription medications the decedent may have been taking. Under a new policy initiated by Harwood, any unused drugs are confiscated at the scene and later, properly destroyed.

“There was nothing in the past about what would be done with these drugs to keep them off the street. We are having an epidemic of overdoses in our county as is everyone else, so we’re trying to prevent that,” said Grandy.

“Coroner Harwood put that policy in place, and it just worked out great to be able to have it on Aladtec; pull out the iPad and have a simple, easy system to count (pills), list the name, and then we obtain a signature from a law enforcement officer as a witness. We seize those narcotics and get rid of them.”

The electronic documentation relieves deputies of liability, and Aladtec’s reports provide readily accessible records.

Grandy has also created a physician’s report form that replicates the information needed for an Illinois death certificate. Elements include the doctor’s name, decedent information; and time, date, cause, and a brief description of what events may have led to the death, and signature blocks for both the physician and deputy coroner.

“In the past, say, I was in the ER for a death, and I had the physician right there, I would have to wait until I get back to the office and fax a form back to the physician. I essentially took that form and copied it into our system. It’s great to be right there, while I’m talking to the doctor in person, I can say -- ‘Hey. Can you go ahead and list the cause of death and sign it for me?’ “

Grandy said staff appreciates “the ease of being able to schedule from home and work on submitting on-call hours from home as well.

Was it challenging to transition to Aladtec from those whiteboards?

“Surprisingly, it wasn’t too bad. We have a few older deputies here who aren’t the most computer-savvy people. They’ve picked it up, and we haven’t had any issues. I think they’re even pleased with it. The people who were against it from the start, I think are even happy with the system and how much it’s made things easier. The schedule alone is huge -- being able to just pull up on your phone or computer at home and look at who you’re relieving in the morning or what pathologist you need to call.”



### **Jamie Harwood**

Jamie Harwood has been a Registered Nurse for 17-plus years with experience including trauma, emergency, and critical care. He also served 15 years as an EMT/firefighter Akron-Princeville Ambulance and Fire Department. He holds a BSN from Pennsylvania State University and is one of three Certified Forensic Nurses in IL.



### **Bo Grandy**

Deputy Coroner Bo Grandy also works as a full-time firefighter at the City of Peoria, and is a former firefighter/paramedic at East Peoria Fire. He studied aeronautical science at Rocky Mountain College in Billings, MT.