

## Ben Straka

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**Subject:** RE: seeking clarification

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**From:** Green Matthew \*OHA <[MATTHEW.GREEN@dhsoha.state.or.us](mailto:MATTHEW.GREEN@dhsoha.state.or.us)>

**Sent:** Tuesday, June 16, 2020 8:49 AM

**To:** Rep Owens <[Rep.MarkOwens@oregonlegislature.gov](mailto:Rep.MarkOwens@oregonlegislature.gov)>

**Cc:** Sen Findley <[Sen.LynnFindley@oregonlegislature.gov](mailto:Sen.LynnFindley@oregonlegislature.gov)>

**Subject:** RE: seeking clarification

Representative Owens,

Without commenting on any particular person's case, I can say that the general situation you describe occasionally arises. As a public health agency, we are not in a position to determine a cause of death; that is appropriately left to a medical examiner or a doctor caring for the patient. So, for public health statistics, we record whether an illness is associated with a death, even if perhaps it is not the cause. Thus, the numbers we publish technically mean that there was a death of a person who had a COVID-19 infection.

Falling off a ladder or being in a car crash are fairly obvious cases where the infection might not be the cause of death. However, it gets more complicated if a person had, say, a heart ailment; was the ailment or the infection the true cause? As I said, public health agencies leave that to the individual's doctors and simply record it as a COVID-19-*related* death.

The technical definition of a COVID-19-related death is:

- For community: death of a confirmed or probable COVID-19 case within 60 days of the earliest available date among exposure to a confirmed case, onset of symptoms, or date of specimen collection for the first positive test; or someone with a COVID-19-specific ICD-10 code listed as a primary or contributing cause of death on a death certificate
- For hospitalized: death from any cause in a hospitalized person during admission or in the 60 days following discharge AND a COVID-19 positive laboratory diagnostic test at any time since 14 days prior to hospitalization.

I hope this answers your question. Please let me know if I can help with anything else.

Thank you,  
Matthew

### Matthew Green

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**From:** Rep Owens <[Rep.MarkOwens@oregonlegislature.gov](mailto:Rep.MarkOwens@oregonlegislature.gov)>  
**Sent:** Friday, June 12, 2020 10:14 AM  
**To:** Green Matthew \*OHA <[MATTHEW.GREEN@dhsosha.state.or.us](mailto:MATTHEW.GREEN@dhsosha.state.or.us)>  
**Cc:** SEN Findley <[Sen.LynnFindley@oregonlegislature.gov](mailto:Sen.LynnFindley@oregonlegislature.gov)>  
**Subject:** seeking clarification  
**Importance:** High

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Mr. Green,

Rep. Owens asked me to reach out to seek clarification from OHA on the death in Malheur County that is being counted as a COVID-19 death. Rep. Owens mentioned this in his newsletter this week and we have received an overwhelming number of emails back from those familiar with the death. All have stated that this gentleman died from falling off a ladder, and it was only discovered after he died that he had COVID.

Why is this being counted as a COVID death? Is anyone that dies and is later found to have had COVID classified as a COVID-related death? Any information you can provide would be helpful, as Rep. Owens would like to put a clarification statement in his next newsletter.

Thank you.

*Andrea "Andi" Domínguez*

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