



**MEDICAL EXAMINER'S  
ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2023**

Staff

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**ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2023**

**DUNN COUNTY MEDICAL EXAMINER'S OFFICE**

## **Mission Statement:**

The mission of the Dunn County Medical Examiner's Office is to provide a voice for the deceased in terms of investigating and ultimately ruling on manner and cause of death. We are statutorily responsible to investigate any unexplained, unusual, or suspicious deaths. These include: accidents, homicides, suicides, deaths unattended by a physician, deaths following a medical intervention, deaths within 24 hours of admission to a health care facility, and deaths where the attending physician is unavailable or unwilling to sign the death certificate. We strive to provide a compassionate, complete, and accurate medicolegal investigation.

## **Summary of Responsibilities:**

The Dunn County Medical Examiner's Office is keenly aware of the tragedy that accompanies sudden and unexpected death. Our office realizes that each case represents an individual who is deeply missed by his/her loved ones. Our investigators are trained to deliver the news of death with compassion, empathy, courtesy, and professionalism. A thorough investigation into the circumstances of death, a complete postmortem examination, and necessary lab studies are conducted to determine cause and manner of death.

## **The Dunn/ Eau Claire County Medical Examiner's Office Works Diligently To:**

- Promote and maintain the highest professional standards in the field of death investigation
- Provide timely, accurate and legally defensible determinations as to cause of death
- Issue death certificates for deaths investigated by this office
- Testifying at legal proceedings
- Comply with Open Records Requests received by the Medical Examiner's Office
- Death notifications to next of kin
- Human remains identification
- Conduct cremation investigations for all deaths in which cremation is selected as a means of final disposition
- Disinterment permit authorization
- Final disposition arrangements for unclaimed human remains
- Protect the interests of deceased individuals, their loved ones, and the communities we serve
- Responsible for accounts payable and receivable

## **The Purpose and Function of the Medical Examiner's Office:**

The purpose and function of the Dunn/Eau Claire County Medical Examiner's Office is to determine the cause and manner of death in those deaths that fall under the jurisdiction of the Medical Examiner's Office (as outlined in WI State Statute §979.01).

The Medical Examiner's Office staff applies their knowledge and experience in the field of death investigation forensic pathology, and toxicology laboratory science to perform comprehensive, professional investigations, which clarify the circumstances surrounding these deaths. Through the identification, documentation and accurate interpretation of relevant forensic scientific information, the Medical Examiner's Office may provide information for use in criminal and civil litigation. This information may also serve to protect public health and safety by identifying contagious diseases; by identifying environmental hazards in the workplace, home and community; and, by tracking local mortality trends (trends in homicides, suicides, motor vehicle fatalities, drug and alcohol related deaths, etc.). As part of our investigation, we may collect evidence, obtain laboratory specimens, and make positive identification of decedents.

### **Department Authority:**

Section §979.01 Wisconsin Statutes requires that any person having knowledge of an unexplained, unusual, or suspicious death, or a death due to homicide, suicide, or a death following an accident, whether the injury is or is not the primary cause of death, a death without a physician in attendance within 30 days preceding death, a death in which the attending physician refuses to sign the death certificate, etc., shall report such death to the medical examiner for investigation. Investigations are conducted by the office for certifying cause and manner of death. Furthermore, if a death appears to be a result of unlawful means, it is reported to the District Attorney pursuant to §979.04 (2), as well as the appropriate local law enforcement agency, for further investigation, and possible criminal prosecution.

Additional investigative responsibilities described in §979.10 direct the medical examiner to view the remains and conduct an investigation into the cause and manner of all deaths in which the next-of-kin selected cremation for final disposition.

### **How and Why the Medical Examiner's Office Functions:**

Approximately, 300 deaths occurred in Dunn County in 2023 with a population of 45,651. This equates to approximately .065% percent of the population in Dunn County. Approximately, 1225 deaths occurred in Eau Claire County in 2023 with a population of 106,837. This equates to approximately 1.15% of the population in Eau Claire County. Many deaths occur in hospitals, nursing homes, hospice care or under the immediate care of a physician and are not unexpected. Others occur as the result of obvious non-natural events (accidents, suicides and homicides). Many of the remaining deaths are unexplained, unexpected and/or suspicious.

All deaths in the State of Wisconsin must be explained by means of a certified death certificate, a legal document which is kept on permanent file with the county and state vital records offices. This document must be filled out and signed by a medical physician caring for the deceased, or by a Medical Examiner/Coroner who has assumed legal jurisdiction over the death. Only a Medical Examiner or Coroner can certify a death as an accident, suicide or homicide because these cases must be investigated by the proper authorities.

In the State of Wisconsin, a county must establish an office to investigate unexplained and non-natural deaths. This office must be run by a Coroner (an elected official) or a Medical Examiner (an official appointed by the County Executive and/or County Board). In most counties in Wisconsin, Coroners and Medical Examiners are not required to be physicians or forensic pathologists. Dunn and Eau Claire Counties work under a Medical Examiner system.

Upon receiving notification of a death, the death will be assigned to the on call Deputy, Chief Deputy or Medical Examiner to investigate the circumstances and to determine if the death indeed falls within the authority of the office, based on state statute §979.01. If the death is felt to not fall under its authority, jurisdiction will be declined, and the certification of the death certificate will be referred to the decedent's personal physician. If no physician can be found or if the physician refuses to sign the death certificate, our office will assume jurisdiction and certify the death.

If the death is felt to fall under the jurisdiction of the Medical Examiner's Office, the next step will be to determine what level of investigation is necessary to determine the cause and manner of death.

Every death is evaluated individually to determine what level of investigation is needed. Some cases may be adequately investigated by obtaining medical records, performing an external exam of the body, and speaking to physicians, family members and/or witnesses. Some cases may require a scene investigation where the Medical Examiner goes to the scene of the death to investigate. Some will require an autopsy and toxicology studies. Some may require additional laboratory studies, follow-up interviews, and the review of police reports and other records.

A typical case requires many hours to determine the cause and manner of death. A complex case can take weeks or months and require extensive investigation and research by the Medical Examiner's Office. Specimens sent to outside laboratories for preparation and/or testing may delay the completion of a case for weeks to months.

In the end, all information collected from the investigation is utilized to determine the cause and manner of death. The office generates an investigative report on each case reported, with autopsy reports generated for every decedent examined by the forensic pathologist at Ramsey County Medical Examiner's Office in St. Paul, MN.

### **Medical Examiner's Responsibilities of Organ and Tissue Donation**

#### Authorization and Decision-Making:

- Since many potential organ or tissue donors fall under medicolegal jurisdiction, the medical examiner bears the responsibility to authorize or deny the procurement of organs or tissues on a case-by-case basis.
- This decision-making process engenders a basic dichotomy for the medical examiner: balancing the need for accurate cause and manner of death assessment with the potential impact of donation on the lives of recipients.

### Valued Organs and Tissues:

- Medical examiners frequently find themselves as the gatekeepers of these valuable organs and tissues.
- Their responsibilities include determining the cause and manner of death, documenting and collecting appropriate evidence, and ensuring that the donation process aligns with their jurisdiction.

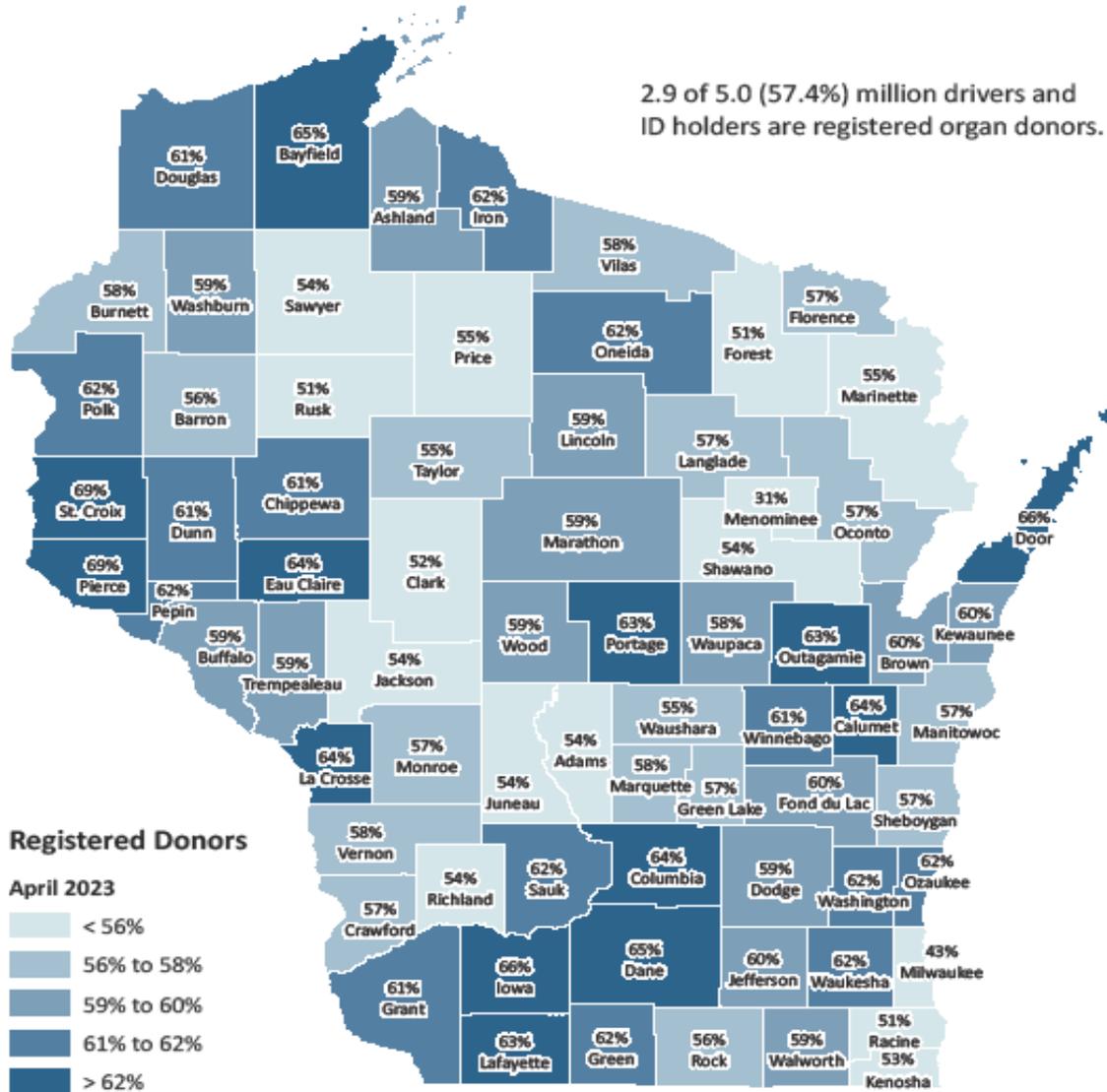
### Education and Communication:

- To facilitate successful organ and tissue donations, education and communication are essential.
- Establishing positive relationships between death investigators and the donation community is crucial.

# Saving Lives in Wisconsin

DonorRegistry.Wisconsin.gov

2.9 of 5.0 (57.4%) million drivers and ID holders are registered organ donors.



Wisconsin Department of Health Services  
Office of Health Informatics  
P-02300 (04/2023)

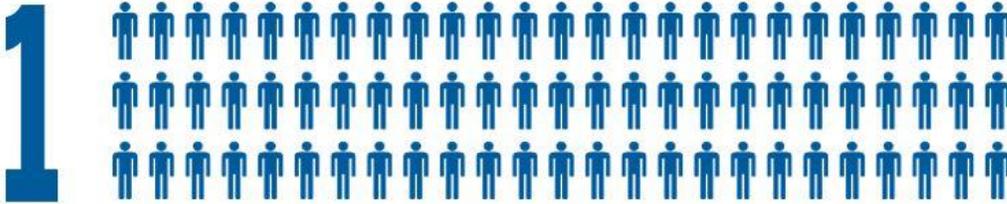


# The Impact

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Gifts of Tissue are processed and viable up to FIVE years

(have any of your lives been impacted by donation?)

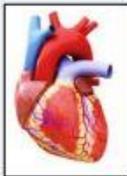


**ONE Tissue Donor** can save and heal **75 or more LIVES**



# BENEFITS AND APPLICATIONS OF DONATED TISSUE

- Naturally biocompatible
- Typically requires no secondary surgical site
- Decreases recovery time
- Promotes tissue strength



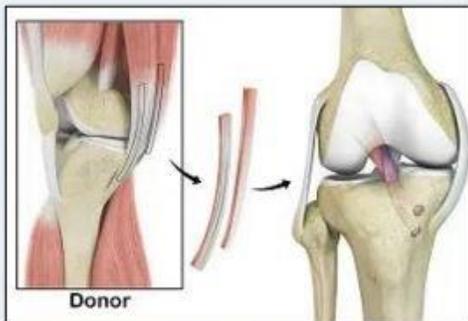
## HEART FOR VALVES

- Treats heart valve disease
- Congenital reconstruction
- Infective endocarditis



## SKIN

- Acts as a life-saving covering for burn recovery
- Prevents infection
- Mastectomy reconstruction



## CONNECTIVE TISSUE

- Rebuilds joints after injury
- Restores mobility
- Corrects urinary incontinence
- Repairs congenital deformities
- Prevents amputations



## SAPHENOUS/ FEMORAL VEINS

- Coronary artery bypass grafts
- Replacement of infected/failing AV access graft
- Treatment for infections

## BONE

- Reconstruction related to fractures and injuries
- Fusion across a diseased joint
- Regeneration due to cancer, infection, or trauma
- Total hip revisions
- Spinal repairs
- Grafts made from humerus, femur, tibia, fibula, ilia, acetabulum, rib



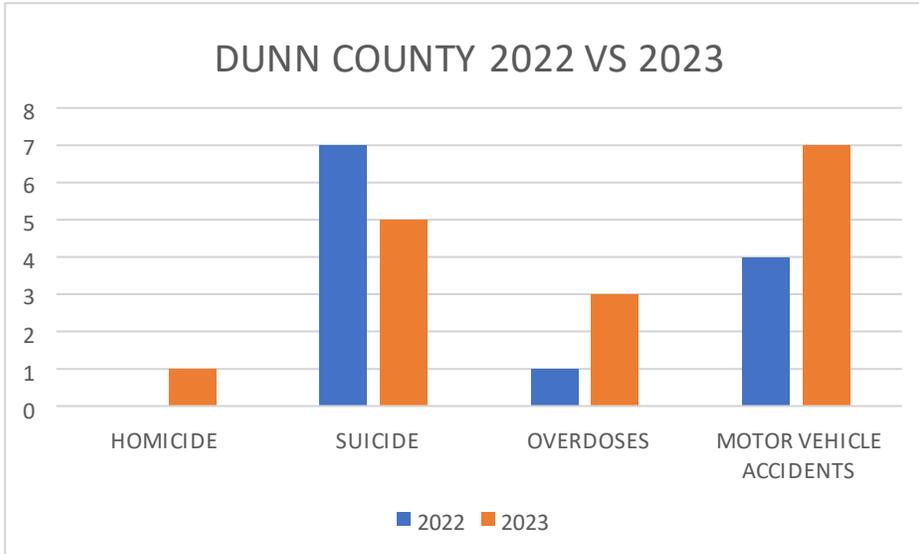
## DUNN COUNTY ME RECAP 2023

	MALE	FEMALE	TOT DEATHS	NATURAL	SUICIDE	UNDETERMINED	HOMICIDE	ACCIDENTAL						INVESTIGATION	CREMATION	BURIAL	Autopsy	UNCLAIMED BODY	
								FALL	MVA	OD	DROWNING	INFANT	OTHER						
JAN	17	13	30	28	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	7	23	7	2	0	
FEB	11	13	24	22	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	6	21	3	0	0	
MAR	11	9	20	19	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	2	19	1	2	0	
APR	10	13	23	21	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	6	21	2	0	0	
MAY	18	13	31	27	0	0	0	2	1	1	0	0	0	15	23	8	2	0	
JUN	10	8	18	16	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	9	13	5	0	0	
JUL	12	13	25	21	0	0	0	1	2	1	0	0	0	8	18	7	0	0	
AUG	12	5	17	15	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	8	13	4	2	0	
SEP	14	15	29	27	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	8	22	7	1	0
OCT	11	15	26	24	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	4	23	3	0	0	
NOV	12	13	25	19	2	0	0	3	1	0	0	0	0	11	18	7	0	1	
DEC	16	14	30	27	1	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	13	24	6	0	0	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>154</b>	<b>144</b>	<b>298</b>	<b>266</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>97</b>	<b>238</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>1</b>	

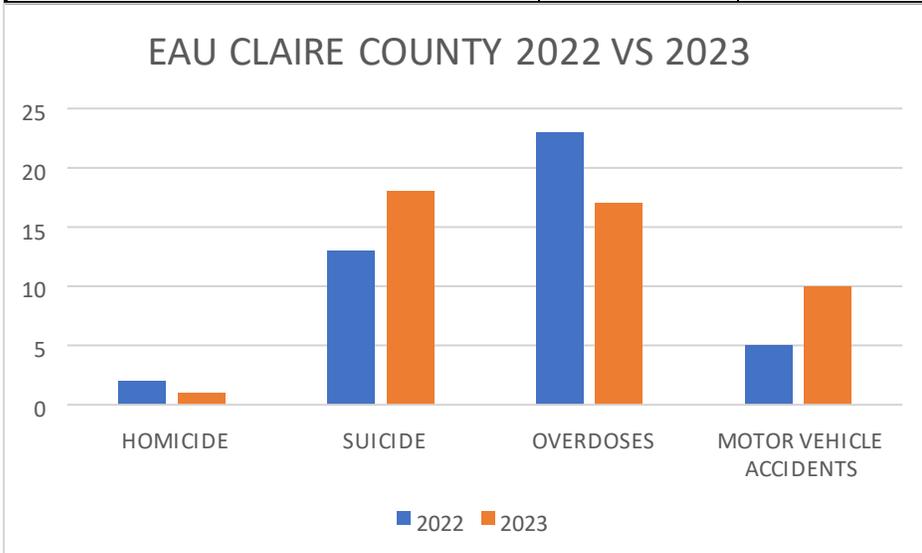
## EAU CLAIRE COUNTY ME RECAP 2023

	MALE	FEMALE	TOT DEATHS	NATURAL	SUICIDE	HOMICIDE	UNDETERMINED	ACCIDENTAL										REFERRAL	INVESTIGATION	CREMATION	BURIAL	Autopsy	UNCLAIMED BODY	ECPD	ECSD
								FALL	MVA	OD	DROWNING	INFANT	OTHER												
JAN	48	56	104	97	0	0	0	2	0	1	0	0	3	1	16	79	24	3	0	5	4				
FEB	39	41	80	73	3	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	1	19	61	18	3	0	7	8				
MAR	60	48	108	98	1	0	1	4	0	1	1	0	0	2	20	89	17	6	0	10	5				
APR	53	49	102	95	3	0	0	2	1	0	0	0	0	1	18	88	13	4	1	9	3				
MAY	54	51	105	98	1	0	0	3	3	0	0	0	0	0	23	84	21	3	1	12	4				
JUN	62	50	112	101	1	0	1	3	1	3	0	0	0	2	27	93	17	7	0	14	5				
JUL	58	40	98	81	3	1	0	4	1	3	0	0	3	2	27	78	18	4	2	11	10				
AUG	45	39	84	77	0	0	0	2	0	0	1	0	2	2	12	67	15	1	0	6	2				
SEP	47	46	93	82	3	0	0	3	1	2	0	1	0	1	16	80	12	1	0	9	4				
OCT	52	44	96	90	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	0	2	8	80	14	1	1	2	3				
NOV	60	56	116	106	1	0	0	7	0	1	1	0	0	0	20	94	22	1	0	5	8				
DEC	59	67	126	114	1	0	0	5	2	3	0	0	0	1	23	98	27	1	0	9	8				
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>637</b>	<b>587</b>	<b>1224</b>	<b>1112</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>229</b>	<b>991</b>	<b>218</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>99</b>	<b>64</b>				

## DEATH REVIEW 2022 VS 2023



	2022	2023
HOMICIDE	0	1
SUICIDE	7	5
OVERDOSES	1	3
MOTOR VEHICLE ACCIDENTS	4	7



	2022	2023
HOMICIDE	2	1
SUICIDE	13	18
OVERDOSES	23	17
MOTOR VEHICLE ACCIDENTS	5	10

**Medical Examiner: Financials Jan - Dec 2023**

Acct Type	Total Actuals	2021 Total Actuals	2022 Total Budget	2023 YTD Actual	2023 Total Projected*	2023
Revenue: Public Charges	(31,318)	(31,188)	(29,800)	(35,073)	(35,073)	
Revenue: Levy	(91,009)	(175,547)	(175,547)	(175,547)		175,547)
Revenue: Interdepartmental	(331,764)	(390,882)	(539,617)	(502,690)		502,690)
Revenue: GF Fund Balance	-	-	(46,442)	-		(46,442)
Expense: S&F	352,060	448,646	624,160	534,154	534,154	
Expense: Operating	176,998	132,136	167,246	142,810	142,810	
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>74,968</b>	<b>(16,835)</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>(36,346)</b>		<b>(82,788)</b>

Revenue	454,090	597,617	791,406	713,310	759,752	
Expense	529,058	580,782	791,406	676,964	676,964	
<b>Net</b>	<b>(74,968)</b>	<b>16,835</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>36,346</b>	<b>82,788</b>	

\* Surplus/(Deficit)

**Projection Methodology:**

1. Wages are projected based on 26 pay periods & health benefits based on 12 months. 2. Expenses and revenues are projected based on year-to-date less than 1 month. It may not be applicable for fixed funding sources (i.e., grants & levy).

**Medical Examiner Dunn County: Financials Jan - Dec 2023**

Acct Type	Total Actuals	2021 Total Actuals	2022 Total Budget	2023 YTD Actual	2023 Total Projected*	2023
Revenue: Public Charges	(31,318)	(31,188)	(29,800)	(35,073)	(35,073)	
Revenue: Levy	(91,009)	(175,547)	(175,547)	(175,547)		175,547)
Revenue: GF Fund Balance	-	-	(37,350)	-		(37,350)
Expense: S&F	102,156	184,175	193,343	202,495	202,495	
Expense: Operating	59,039	21,739	49,354	27,210	27,210	
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>38,868</b>	<b>(822)</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>19,084</b>		<b>(18,266)</b>

Revenue	122,327	206,735	242,697	210,620	247,970	
Expense	161,195	205,914	242,697	229,704	229,704	
<b>Net</b>	<b>(38,868)</b>	<b>822</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>(19,084)</b>	<b>18,266</b>	

**Medical Examiner Eau Claire County: Financials Jan - Dec 2023**

Acct Type	Total Actuals	2021 Total Actuals	2022 Total Budget	2023 YTD Actual	2023 Total Projected*	2023
Revenue: Interdepartmental	(331,764)	(390,882)	(539,617)	(502,690)		502,690)
Revenue: GF Fund Balance	-	-	(9,092)	-		(9,092)
Expense: S&F	249,904	264,471	430,817	331,660	331,660	
Expense: Operating	117,959	110,397	117,892	115,600	115,600	
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>36,099</b>	<b>(16,013)</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>(55,430)</b>		<b>(64,522)</b>

Revenue	331,764	390,882	548,709	502,690	511,782
Expense	367,863	374,869	548,709	447,260	447,260
<b>Net</b>	<b>(36,099)</b>	<b>16,013</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>55,430</b>	<b>64,522</b>