



**MARICOPA COUNTY
OFFICE OF THE MEDICAL EXAMINER
701 W. Jefferson Street
Phoenix, AZ 85007**

MEDICAL EXAMINER REPORT

DECEDENT: Passion Elliah Schurz

CASE: 26-03414

DATE OF EXAMINATION: 03/29/2026

TIME: 0850 Hours

PERSONS PRESENT AT EXAMINATION:

Salt River Police Department: Detective Roberto Rangel, #367 **Scottsdale Police Department:** Detective Matt Leal, #771; Detective Jacob Hanser, #1385

CAUSE OF DEATH:

Drowning

CONTRIBUTORY CAUSE OF DEATH:

Fentanyl intoxication

MANNER OF DEATH:

Undetermined

HOW INJURY OCCURRED:

Partially submerged in water and consumed fentanyl

06-27-2026

Date Signed

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "K. Cochrane".

**KATHERINE COCHRANE, MD
MEDICAL EXAMINER**

FINDINGS

- I. Drowning
 - A. Found prone in a canal
- II. Fentanyl intoxication
 - A. See toxicology report
- III. Postmortem decomposition, moderate

SUMMARY AND OPINION

This 28-year-old woman was reportedly found floating face down in a canal near a metal gate on March 28, 2026. Death was pronounced at the scene. Per available medical records, her medical history was significant for polysubstance abuse and depression. According to the investigative report and law enforcement personnel, her mother reported her missing on March 22, 2026. She reportedly had a history of suicidal ideation with prior attempts, as well as a history of self-harm by cutting.

Postmortem examination showed an adult female with the findings outlined above. No significant/lethal trauma was identified at autopsy. Skin and soft tissue defects of the nose and left upper eyelid may represent postmortem animal activity or postmortem trauma from contact with the canal grate, canal walls, or debris in the water, or during recovery from the water. Postmortem toxicologic analysis was positive for fentanyl and ethanol. Ethanol in the setting of decomposition may be present as a result of antemortem consumption and/or postmortem endogenous production. See toxicology report for further details.

It is possible that the decedent accidentally entered the canal while acutely intoxicated, although her history of suicidal ideations and previous attempts raises the possibility that she entered the canal intentionally. Since it cannot be determined with certainty whether the decedent accidentally or intentionally entered the canal, it is my opinion that the manner of death is best classified as undetermined.

In consideration of the known circumstances surrounding this death, the available medical history, and the examination of the remains, it is my opinion that the cause of death is drowning with fentanyl intoxication as a significant contributing condition.

As with all death investigations, opinions expressed herein are amenable to change should new, reliable, and pertinent information come to light.

The Maricopa County Medical Examiner's Office is required by statute (A.R.S. § 11-594(A) (2) and (4)) to certify the cause and manner of death following completion of the death investigation of each case over which it assumes jurisdiction, and to promptly execute a death certificate, on a form provided by the state registrar of vital statistics, indicating the cause and manner of death. The form provided by the state registrar of vital statistics includes five manners of death: homicide, suicide, accident, natural, and undetermined. The determination of manner of death is a forensic determination by the pathologist

predicated upon the totality of all then-known forensic evidence and other circumstances surrounding the cause of death; it is not a legal determination of criminal or civil responsibility of any person(s) for the death.

POSTMORTEM EXAMINATION

The body is received in the supine position within a body bag with intact seal numbered 0034409.

CLOTHING AND PERSONAL EFFECTS

Any clothing and/or personal effects accompanying the body are detailed in the property inventory list.

EVIDENCE OF MEDICAL INTERVENTION

There is no evidence of medical intervention.

EXTERNAL EXAMINATION

The body is that of a well-developed, well-nourished, adult, light-complexioned female who is 66 inches in length and weighs 148 pounds as received. The body is cold. Rigor mortis is absent. Fixed pink livor mortis extends over the anterior surfaces of the body, except in areas exposed to pressure. There is moderate postmortem change as evidenced by irregular green-brown discoloration of the body surfaces, bloating, vascular marbling, and skin slippage. Brown dirt covers the body surfaces. On the bridge of the nose is a 1.5 x 1.3 cm defect with absence of the skin and soft tissues exposing underlying cartilage. There is partial absence of the skin and soft tissues of the upper eyelid.

The head appears normocephalic. The scalp hair is brown, wavy, and predominantly sloughed from the scalp. The irides are brown. The corneas are clouded. The sclerae and the conjunctivae are clear. The nose and ears appear normally developed. The anterior teeth are natural and in adequate condition. The neck organs are in the normal midline position.

The thorax is well-developed and symmetrical. The paired breasts are without palpable masses. The abdomen is distended. The external genitalia are those of an adult female. The anus appears atraumatic.

The upper extremities are well-developed and symmetrical without absence of digits. The hands have short, trimmed fingernails. The lower extremities are well-developed and symmetrical without absence of digits. The spine is normally formed, and the surface of the back is free of lesions.

IDENTIFYING MARKS, SCARS, AND TATTOOS

- 1) Tattoos on the right neck posterior to the ear, right forearm, and upper back
- 2) A 1.5 cm horizontal linear scar on the lateral left forearm
- 3) Two horizontal linear scars on the anterior left forearm, 5 cm and 4.5 cm

EVIDENCE OF INJURY

No injuries are identified on external or internal examination.

INTERNAL EXAMINATION

The body is opened with a routine thoracoabdominal incision. The skeletal muscle is brown and softened due to decomposition.

BODY CAVITIES

No adhesions or abnormal collections of fluid are in the pleural spaces or peritoneal cavity. All body organs are in a normal and anatomic position. The serous surfaces and pericardium are smooth and glistening.

CARDIOVASCULAR SYSTEM

The heart weighs 225 grams. The coronary arteries arise normally and follow the distribution of a right dominant pattern with no significant atherosclerosis. The chambers are dilated postmortem. The valves are normally formed, thin, pliable, and free of vegetations and degenerative changes. The myocardium is red-brown, slightly putrefied, and free of gross fibrosis. The atrial and ventricular septa are intact. The left ventricle measures 1 cm, the right ventricle 0.3 cm, and the interventricular septum 1 cm in thickness as measured 1 cm below the respective atrioventricular valve annulus. The aorta and its major branches arise normally and follow the usual course with no significant atherosclerosis. The orifices of the major aortic vascular branches are patent. The vena cava and its major tributaries are patent, return to the heart in the usual distribution, and are unremarkable.

RESPIRATORY SYSTEM

The left and right lungs weigh 300 and 325 grams, respectively. The upper and lower airways are unobstructed, and the mucosal surfaces are smooth and red-brown. The pleural surfaces are smooth with scattered anthracotic pigment deposition. The pulmonary parenchyma is red-purple, slightly putrefied, and free of consolidation and masses. The pulmonary arteries are unremarkable and patent, with no thromboemboli.

HEPATOBIILIARY SYSTEM AND PANCREAS

The liver weighs 875 grams. The hepatic capsule is smooth and intact, covering red-brown, soft, partially air-filled parenchyma. The thin-walled gallbladder contains brown watery bile without stones. The pancreas has a normal size, shape, position, and pink, mildly putrefied parenchyma.

GASTROINTESTINAL SYSTEM

The esophagus is lined by a gray-brown, smooth mucosa. The gastroesophageal junction is unremarkable. The gastric mucosa is flattened, and the lumen contains 100 mL of dark brown fluid with partially digested food fragments. The small bowel has a uniform dimension and appears unremarkable. The appendix is present. The colon has a uniform dimension and appears unremarkable, without diverticula or externally obvious masses.

GENITOURINARY SYSTEM

The left and right kidneys each weigh 125 grams. The renal capsules are smooth, thin, semitransparent, and strip with ease from the underlying smooth, red-brown, soft cortical surfaces. The cortices are of normal thickness and delineated from the medullary pyramids. The calyces, pelves, and ureters are non-dilated and free of stones. The urinary bladder is empty. The bladder mucosa is gray-tan and smooth. The uterus, fallopian tubes, ovaries, and vagina are moderately putrefied and otherwise unremarkable. There is no gross evidence of pregnancy.

RETICULOENDOTHELIAL SYSTEM

The spleen weighs 75 grams and has a smooth intact capsule covering red-purple, diffuent parenchyma. Regional lymph nodes are grossly unremarkable. The thymus is involuted.

ENDOCRINE SYSTEM

The thyroid gland is of normal position and size and has a red-brown, slightly putrefied parenchyma. The adrenal glands have decomposing cut surfaces with yellow cortex and brown medulla.

NECK

Examination of the soft tissues of the neck, including strap muscles and large vessels, reveals no abnormalities. The hyoid bone and thyroid cartilage are intact. The laryngeal mucosa and tongue are unremarkable.

HEAD

Reflection of the scalp reveals no abnormalities. The skull is of normal thickness and without fracture. The brain weighs 1075 grams. The dura mater and falx cerebri are intact, and not adherent to the brain. There is no epidural, subdural, or subarachnoid hemorrhage. The parenchyma of the brain is gray, soft, and putrefied, and examination of the liquified parenchyma does not reveal any mass lesions or obvious hemorrhage.

MUSCULOSKELETAL SYSTEM

The bony framework, supporting musculature, and soft tissues are not unusual. The cervical spinal column is stable on internal palpation.

SPECIMENS

At the time of autopsy, liver tissue, hair, and a DNA fluid card are retained.

EVIDENCE

Evidence transferred to the investigating agency is detailed in the evidence inventory list.

RADIOGRAPHS

Postmortem radiographs show dental restorations and are negative for retained radiopaque objects and obvious acute skeletal injuries.

HISTOLOGY

No histologic sections are taken for microscopic examination.

TOXICOLOGY

See separate toxicology report.

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