

# Opiate Overdoses and Naloxone Administrations in New Orleans



DEA  
BULLETIN



(U) This DEA Bulletin is based on preliminary reporting and may be subject to updating as additional information becomes available.

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## Event

Documenting the administration of naloxone in New Orleans, LA, is one way to determine the amount of heroin being abused in the city. Naloxone, sold under the name Narcan<sup>®</sup>, is a medication used to counter the effects of heroin and opioid overdoses. Naloxone is typically administered by first responders and can reverse the depression of the central nervous system, respiratory system and hypotension caused by an overdose. In calendar years (CYs) 2013, 2014, 2015, and 2016, Orleans Parish Emergency Medical Services documented 3,467 administrations of naloxone (655, 920, 980, and 912 for the respective years).

## Significance

According to the Orleans Parish Coroner's Office, the number of accidental drug-related overdose deaths in the City of New Orleans in 2016 exceeded the number of murders for the first time in the city's history. Drug-related deaths in Orleans Parish totaled 211 in 2016, more than double the number reported in 2015. Seventy-eight percent of the fatal overdose deaths (166 total) in 2016 were opioid-related. This is more than twice the 81 overdose deaths in 2015. According to the Orleans Parish Coroner's Office, fentanyl was found in 48 (29 percent) of the 166 people who died with opioids in their system. This percentage represented a three-fold increase from the 13 who died the same way in 2015. Males represented approximately 80 percent of the overdose fatalities in both 2015 and 2016.

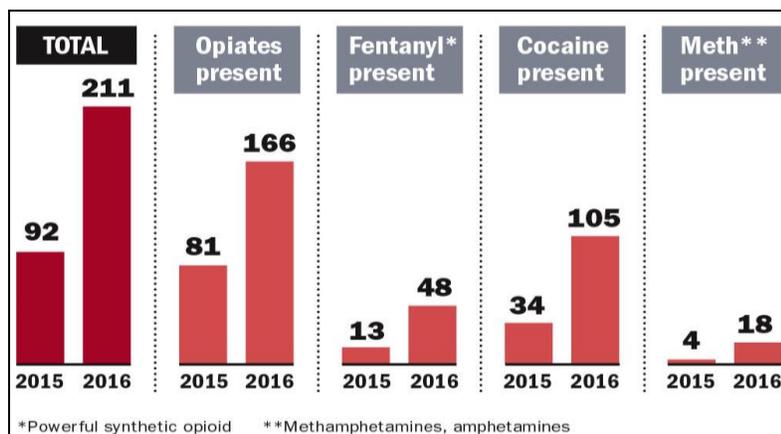
Of note, many of the overdose victims had multiple drugs in their systems. The Orleans Parish Coroner's Office reported that cocaine was present in 105 deaths in 2016, compared to 34 in 2015.

The Orleans Parish Coroner’s Office also stated that the presence of opiates, cocaine, and alcohol was one of the most dangerous combinations that they are observing because it seems to be a particularly lethal combination and leads the office to suspect that users may be revisiting the old “speedball” method (injecting both cocaine and heroin into their system).

### Details

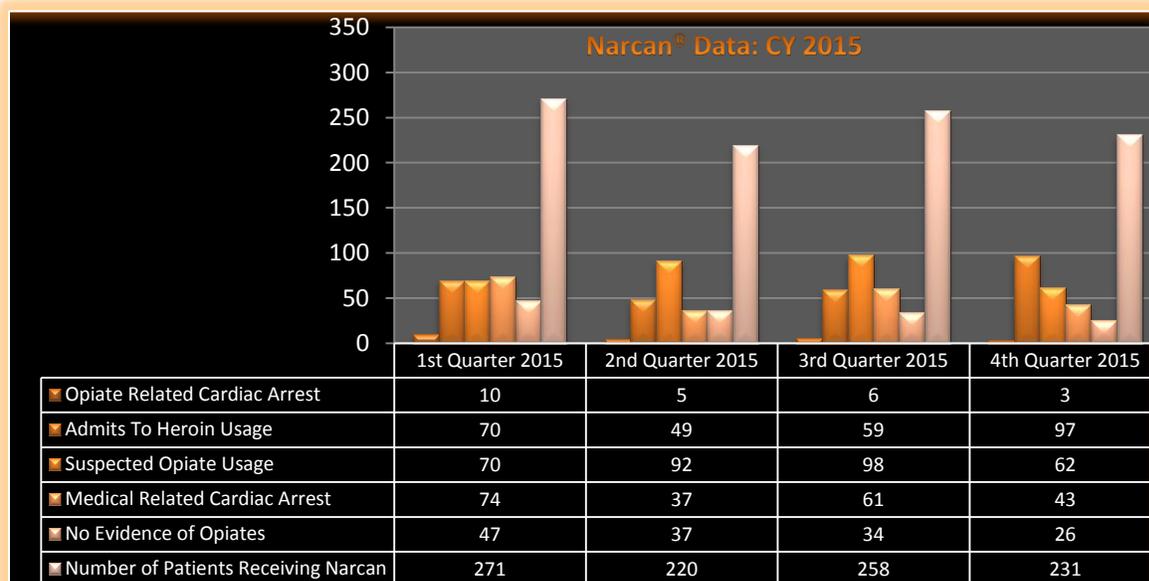
According to Emergency Services for the City of New Orleans (New Orleans EMS), opioid misuse was responsible for more than 600 emergency service overdose calls in 2015, and more than 780 in 2016—figures that only represent naloxone administrations and not all overdoses. New Orleans EMS also stated that some opiate overdoses do not require a naloxone administration, and that they have never had to administer multiple doses of naloxone on a single overdose call to date.

(U) Figure 1. Accidental drug-related deaths in New Orleans.



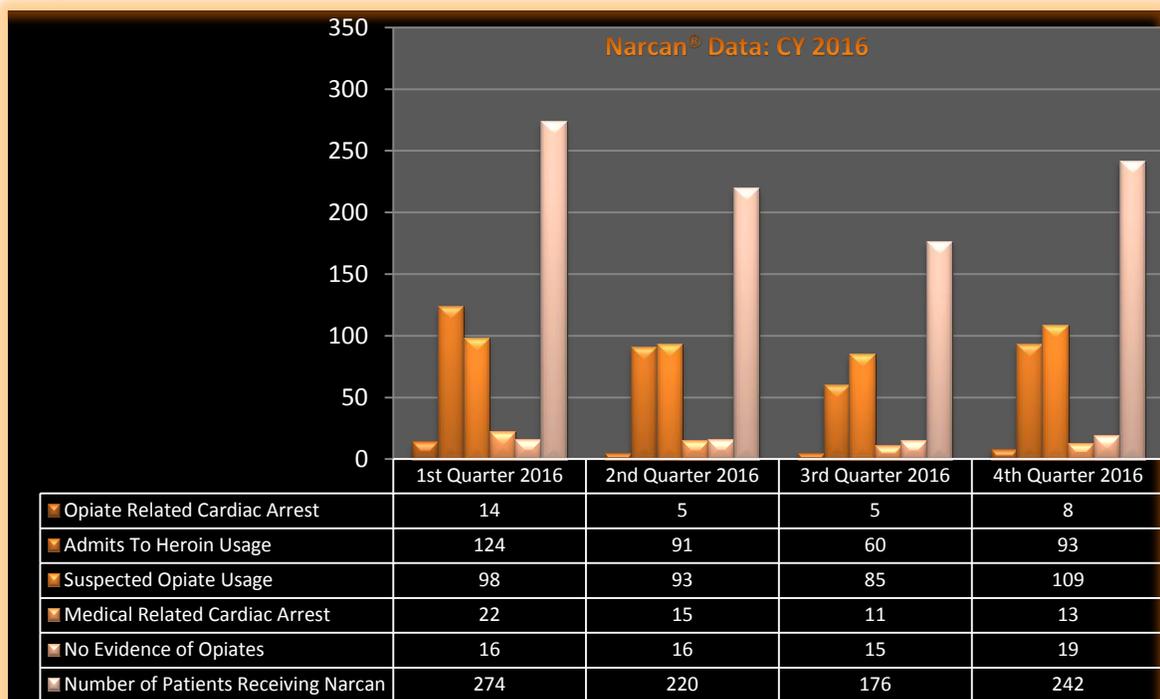
Source: New Orleans Coroner’s Office/The New Orleans Advocate Newspaper

(U) Figure 2. Naloxone Administration in Orleans Parish for CY15.



Source: Emergency Medical Services, City of New Orleans

(U) Figures 3. Naloxone Administration in Orleans Parish for CY16.



Source: Emergency Medical Services, City of New Orleans

Of the 980 naloxone administrations in CY15, 621 (64 percent) of the administrations were due to opiate-related cardiac arrest, heroin usage, or suspected heroin usage. In CY16, New Orleans EMS administered 912 doses of naloxone, 785 (86 percent) of which were due to opiate-related cardiac arrest, heroin usage, or suspected heroin usage. This is a 22 percent increase in opiate related naloxone administrations in a 1-year period.

(U) This product was prepared by the DEA New Orleans Division. Comments and questions may be addressed to the Chief, Analysis and Production Section at [dea.onsi@usdoj.gov](mailto:dea.onsi@usdoj.gov). For media/press inquiries call (202) 307-7977.