



# RESPONSE TO SEVERE OPIATE OVERDOSES

*Eight-Year Data Comparison (2015 through 6/2023)*

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## **Introduction**

Opiate overdose cases are increasing in frequency. This trend has become statistically significant over the past two years. Patients that absorb excessive amounts of opiates (prescribed or recreational) are at risk of death due to the effects of the drug. Death occurs from respiratory arrest because the opiates affect the body's respiratory drive. This document provides a summary comparison of opiate overdose cases from 2015 through December Of 2022.

The Spokane Fire Department's two electronic health records systems provide the source of this data. In 2017, the Fire Department transitioned from the SafetyPad electronic health records system to ESO. The ESO system contains a report entitled "Ohio Narcan Administration Report" which captures all instances when a Spokane Fire Department provider administers Narcan. A thorough review of each report is performed to identify opiate-related overdose cases and cases where Narcan is administered for non-opiate related cases in accordance with County Medical Protocols.

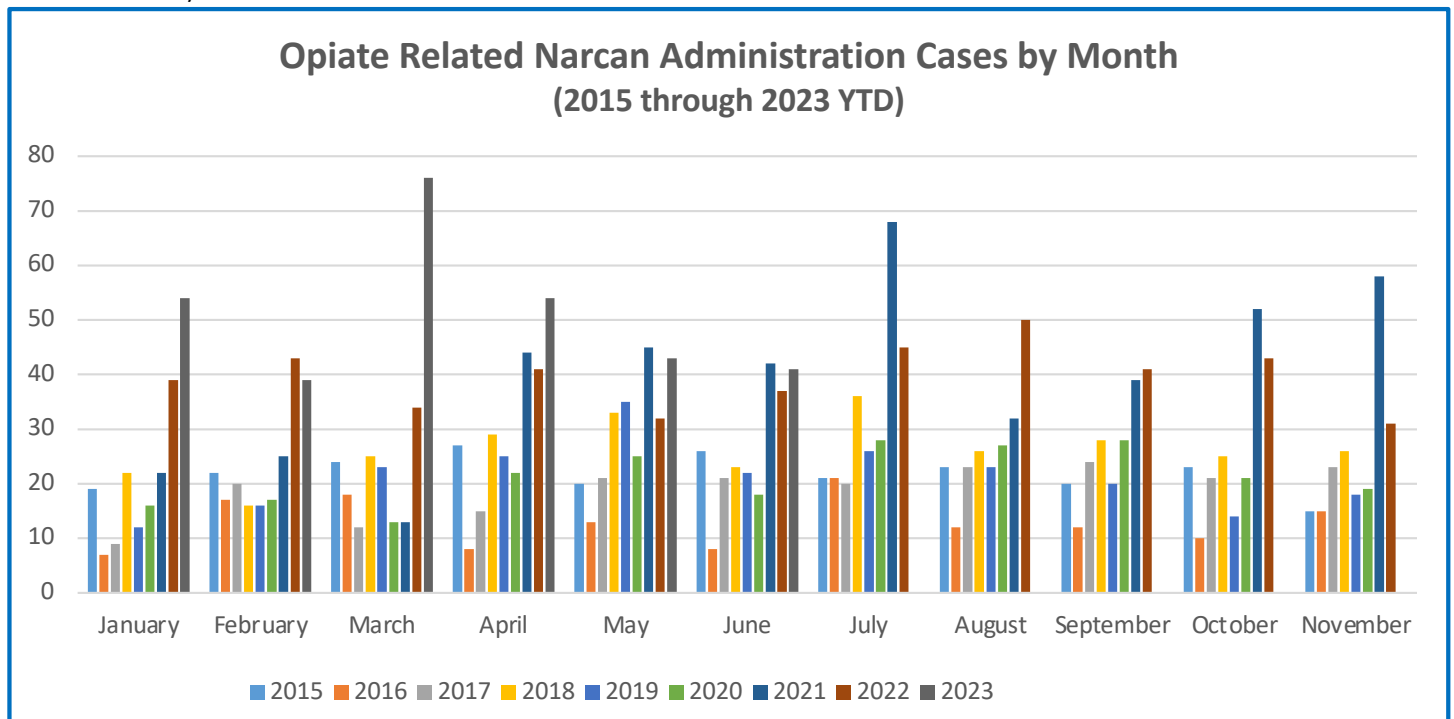
## **General Findings**

There are 1,813 total cases involving administration of Narcan for confirmed or suspected opiate overdoses from January of 2015 through December of 2022. It is important to note:

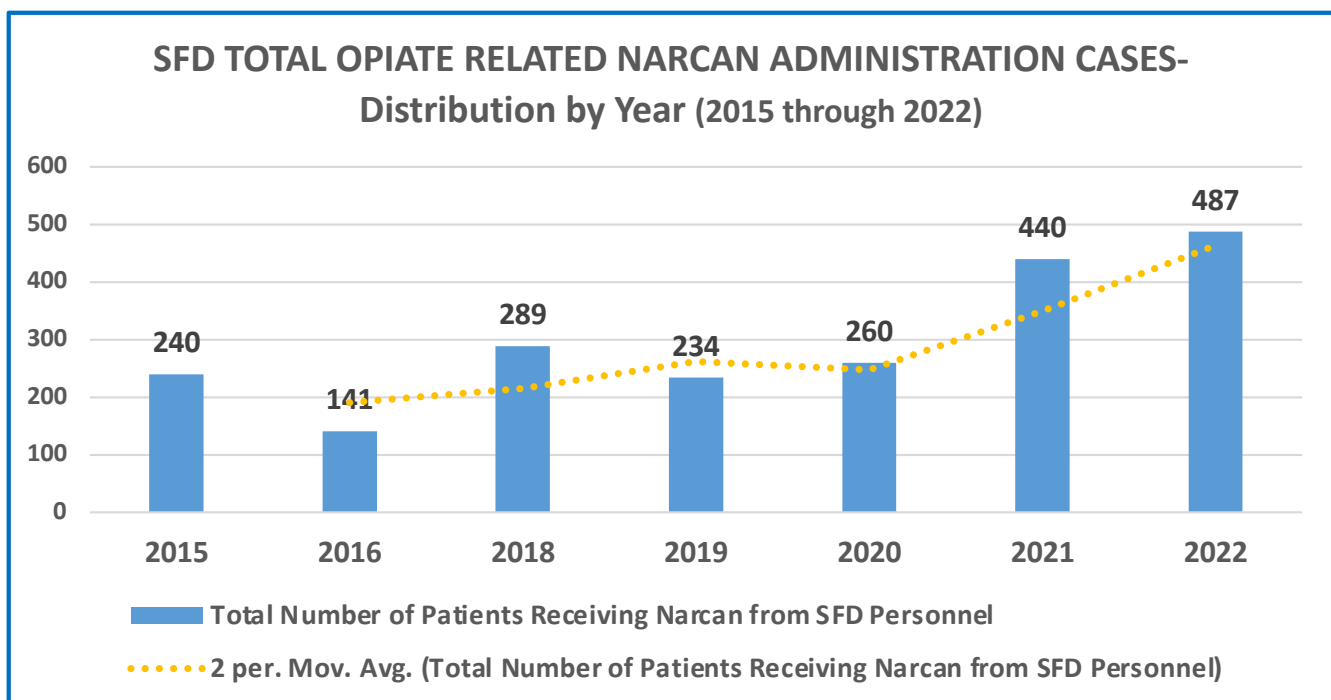
- The case count reflects only cases that involved a Spokane Fire Department response and provides a snapshot of opiate related cases in the community. These numbers do not include instances where an individual is brought to a local hospital by private vehicle or a death occurs and resuscitation is not initiated. These number also do not reflect cases where SPD or a lay person administered Narcan. The Spokane Regional Health District will have a more complete data set;
- Older adults (over the age of 60 years) are included in the Fire Department's data. In most, if not all cases involving older adults, the overdose is unintentional and can be related to not understanding dosage and use on the part of the older adult; and
- Many times the patient or witnesses are not forthcoming on use of opiates for fear of legal action. The assumption is made that if Narcan administration reverses the symptoms, then the source is most likely an opiate substance.

### Number of Severe Opiate Overdose Cases by Month

The following chart illustrates the number of responses, by month, for each of the years that data was analyzed.

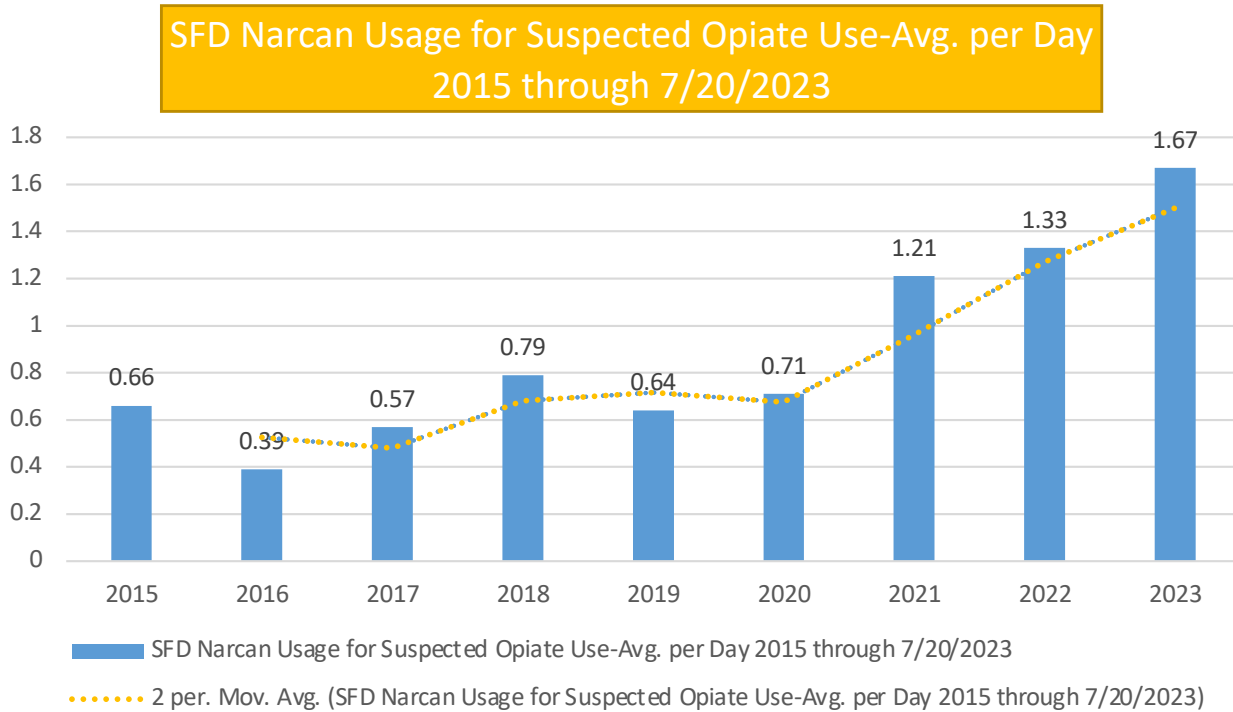


The Spokane Fire Department's EMS Division has been tracking opiate overdose data since 2015. A pronounced increase in the number of opiate-related incidents started to emerge in 2013 and 2014 then flattened once again.. In 2021, while still small in comparison to other cities throughout the United States, Spokane experienced a significant surge in cases (87.3% between 2020 and 2022). The following chart illustrates the total number of opiate related cases from 2015 through 2022.



### Average Daily Opiate-Related Overdose Cases

Unlike some cities in the Pacific Northwest and throughout the U.S., Spokane encounters a relatively low number of opiate related cases. Until 2021, Heroin was frequently identified as the source substance, in 2021, there was a marked increase in Fentanyl as the source substance as documented by SFD Personnel.



### Final Thoughts

Elicit, inappropriate and accidental use of opiates is a health concern for everyone. Whether it's someone with substance use disorder or an older adult who unwittingly ingests the wrong amount of prescribed medication, opiate abuse is a life-threatening situation. Advances in making Narcan available to law enforcement and the lay public is facilitating rapid intervention and reversal of life-threatening breathing problems associate with an opiate overdose. The data shows that Narcan is being administered more frequently by law enforcement and by lay public who directly witness the event.

While Fentanyl and other opiates are becoming far more prevalent in people who experience opiate use disorder, there are frequently cases where Methamphetamine continues to be a contributor to substance use disorder. Males, more frequently than females tend to be treated for opiate use disorder. Interestingly, close to 80% of the patients encountered by Spokane Fire Department personnel were either not breathing or had life-threatening respiratory complications that if gone untreated with Narcan would have resulted in the patient's demise.

