

**DOCUMENTATION OF THE
MORTALITY TAPE FILE FOR
1998 DATA**

SPECIAL NOTICE

EFFECTIVE WITH 1998 DATA, COMMONWEALTH OF THE
NORTHERN MARIANAS RECORDS ARE INCLUDED IN THE
TERRITORIES' PUBLIC USE FILE

EFFECTIVE WITH 1997 DATA, AMERICAN SAMOA RECORDS
ARE INCLUDED IN THE TERRITORIES' PUBLIC-USE FILE

This tape documentation was prepared in the Division of Vital Statistics. Gail Parr and Vanetta Harrington of the Systems Programming and Statistical Resources Branch were responsible for developing the mortality documentation. Sherry Murphy of the Mortality Statistics Branch coordinated preparation of the Technical Appendix. The Registration Methods Staff and the Data Acquisition and Evaluation Branch provided consultation to the State vital statistics offices regarding collection of death certificate data.

Questions concerning the documentation or general questions concerning the mortality file should be directed to the Systems Programming and Statistical Resources Branch, Division of Vital Statistics, NCHS, 6525 Belcrest Road, Room 888, Hyattsville, MD 20782 (301-458-4420).

Questions concerning the Technical Appendix or substantive questions concerning the mortality data should be directed to the Mortality Statistics Branch, Division of Vital Statistics, NCHS, 6525 Belcrest Road, Room 840, Hyattsville, MD 20782 (301-458-4666).

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SYMBOLS USED IN TABLES

Symbol	Explanation
---	Data not available
...	Category not applicable
-	Quantity zero
0.0	Quantity more than 0 but less than 0.05
*	Figure does not meet standards of reliability or precision

Documentation of the Multiple Cause-of-Death Public-Use File for 1998 Data

I. Introduction

Data on causes of death are released by NCHS in a variety of ways including published reports, special tabulations to answer data requests, and public-use data tapes. Since the inception of the multiple cause-of-death program in 1968, a public-use tape file has been released for each data year. Each file contains a data record for all deaths processed by NCHS. Each data record contains underlying cause, multiple cause, and demographic data for a death.

With the exception of calendar years 1972, 1981 and 1982, all deaths occurring annually in the United States are processed. In 1972, underlying and multiple cause data were coded and processed for only 50 percent of the deaths occurring in each State. In 1981 and 1982, multiple cause data were coded on a 50 percent sample basis for deaths occurring in 19 registration areas. The registration areas are the 50 States, New York City and the District of Columbia. The 50 percent sample States are identified in the documentation of the 1981 and 1982 files. For the remaining 33 registration areas, multiple cause data were processed on a 100 percent basis. In 1981 and 1982, underlying cause, demographic, and geographic data were processed for every death occurring in every State; however the multiple cause-of-death public-use tape contains only those records where the multiple cause field is also coded. A public-use tape containing underlying cause, demographic, and geographic data for every death in the United States is available but contains no multiple cause data.

This document is intended to provide guidance to the consumer in accessing and utilizing the multiple cause-of-death public-use tape file for 1998. It provides the technical data processing information necessary to access the tapes and the classification structure and coding rules applied to create each variable on the file such that the user can readily assess relevance at varying levels of detail to his/her own particular research. Additionally, it conveys the characteristics of the multiple cause files sufficient to guide the user in analyzing and interpreting multiple cause data. The user is alerted to certain pitfalls of interpretation; and the appropriateness of each type of multiple cause data to given applications is discussed. Control totals are also provided for comparison with user generated counts for 1998 data.

A revised U.S. Standard Certificate of Death was recommended for State use beginning on January 1, 1989. Among the changes were the addition of a new item on educational attainment and changes to improve the medical certification of cause of death. In addition, for the first time, the U.S. Standard Certificate of Death includes a question on the Hispanic origin of the decedent. Previously a number of States had included an Hispanic-origin identifier on their certificates. A change was also made in the format of the item to obtain information on type of place of death from an open-ended question to a checkbox.

The Office of Management and Budget revised its designation of metropolitan statistical areas based on figures from the 1990 Census. For the 1990 through 1993 data files, NCHS has been using these new definitions and codes as indicated in the listing of 320 Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSAs), Primary Metropolitan Statistical Areas (PMSAs), and New England County Metropolitan Areas (NECMAs) included in the documentation for those years. There are also 20 Consolidated Metropolitan Statistical Areas (CMSAs) which are made up of PMSAs. Because other geographic changes based on the 1990 Census became effective with the 1994 data file, the metropolitan statistical area designations were updated as well. Effective with the 1994 data file, there are 311 MSA's, PMSA's, and NECMA's; and 18 CMSA's as indicated in the listing included with this documentation.

NCHS has adopted a new policy on release of vital statistics unit record data files. This new policy was implemented for the 1989 vital event files to prevent the inadvertent disclosure of individuals and institutions. As a result, the files for 1989 and later years do not contain the actual day of the death or the date of birth of the decedent. The geographic detail is also restricted; only counties and cities of 100,000 or more population based on the 1990 census, as well as metropolitan areas of 100,000 or more population based on the 1990 Census are identified.