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## **Officials: No links in rash of suicides**

By Laura Ernde, STAFF WRITER  
Inside Bay Area

REDWOOD CITY — In an unusual coincidence, three unrelated people committed suicide in San Mateo County in a 24-hour period, the San Mateo Coroner's Office reported Wednesday.

A fourth death in the same time span, from 1 a.m. Tuesday to 1 a.m. Wednesday, was being investigated as a possible suicide, Coroner Robert J. Foucrault said.

The suicide spike is out of the ordinary for the office, which sees an average of three to six suicides per month, according to Coroner's Office statistics going back to 1996.

But Foucrault and mental health officials said it does not indicate a trend because suicide numbers usually fluctuate wildly and are not linked to any one event.

"A lot of it is just individual problems. They all have their own unique set of circumstances," he said.

Suicide strikes young and old, rich and poor, according to demographics compiled by the Suicide Prevention and Crisis Intervention Center in San Mateo.

The rash of suicides began at 1 a.m. Tuesday, when a 50-year-old Menlo Park man cut his wrists and was taken to San Mateo Medical Center, Foucrault said.

He was conscious and talking on his way to the hospital, so the Coroner's Office was doing an autopsy to determine whether he died from his wounds or a drug overdose, Foucrault said.

Investigators found suicide notes at his home, he said.

A 19-year-old Menlo Park man and a 78-year-old East Palo Alto man were among those who most recently took their lives.

A fourth man was killed early Wednesday morning after kneeling in front of a train passing through San Mateo (see story on News 1).

Michelle Joyce, crisis center program manager at the Suicide Prevention and Crisis Intervention Center, was surprised by the unusual one-day jump but said it doesn't necessarily indicate a trend.

"It seems like there's really no rhyme or reason," she said.

It's good to be aware of the suicide warning signs and what do to if you suspect that someone you know has suicidal thoughts, Joyce said.

The most important thing is to take any suicide threat seriously and talk openly with the person about their thoughts and feelings, she said.

"A lot of times people are afraid to ask someone if they are thinking about suicide because it's so taboo in our

society," she said.

Get help from a nonprofit group such as hers by calling

(800) SUICIDE, or if it's an emergency, the police can help, she said.

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