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I covered 10 Florida executions and I'm still numb from it | Exclusive

Two more criminals will experience lethal injection in Florida July 28. In 2025, I covered 10 of the 19 executions and the memories are still vivid and painful.



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Key Points

- A USA TODAY reporter describes the process of covering 10 executions in Florida during 2025.
- Journalists follow a strict protocol, including a media briefing and surrendering all electronics before entering the death chamber.
- Florida uses a three-drug lethal injection, though inmates can request an electric chair that has never been used.
- The reporter details the final words of some inmates and the reactions of victims' family members.

Covering executions in Florida as a journalist is both mundane and traumatizing, especially when you're in the death chamber numerous times. I covered 10 executions one year and every time there's another [death by lethal injection](#), it brings up tough memories.

In 2025 I was with the Associated Press and it was my 40th year as a reporter. I drew the lucky assignment of covering executions beginning in February. The state ultimately carried out a record 19 that year under Republican Gov. Ron DeSantis, who's on another rapid death warrant pace this year with seven executions as of early July.

The AP has a permanent media witness seat in the death chamber, which on July 28 is scheduled to be the site of the [first double execution in Florida in 60 years](#). Unlike

the past, when executions were broadly covered, there are usually only a handful of reporters these days.

Journalists gather at Florida State Prison near Starke before the execution

So, in 2025, for me it was off to Starke and the hulking, ominous-looking [Florida State Prison](#) once or twice a month. Most of the executions are at 6 p.m., but reporters have to get there by 3 p.m. for a media briefing inside a tent across from the prison.

Everything has been reported on the individuals, so the questions for officials are more of that particular day. Like, did he (they were all men) have any visitors? What was his last meal? Any issues with his behavior?

Vans take reporters to prison, no electronics allowed

With that, we wait. Around 4:30 p.m., corrections officers driving white vans show up to take reporters into the prison. We are issued two sharpened No. 2 pencils and a notepad. No electronics, phones or other way to contact the outside world is permitted until after the execution.

It is disconcerting to say the least when those sliding, barred prison gates slam shut behind you. The rest of the prison is quiet, with inmates on lockdown during an execution. The concertina-wired exercise yards are deserted.

First stop is a room where family members can visit with prisoners and is used as a media staging area. It even has a rack of children's books to read from. There we sit until it's time to witness the execution, when we are escorted to the chamber in the vans once again.

Death chamber is built like a theater with a large glass wall on one side

The room is actually fairly small, built like a movie theater with four rows of seats facing a large glass window that initially is obscured by a curtain. The reporters sit in the very last row, with those in front filled with family members, investigators and others connected to a crime that likely happened decades ago.

No talking is allowed. The main sound is the hum of an air conditioner.

As the appointed hour rolls around, the curtain goes up and there is the condemned inmate lying on a gurney with needles already in his arm to deliver the deadly drugs.

There are three men in suits in the chamber. One makes a last phone call to the governor's office to determine if there is a reprieve — there never was — and then reads the execution proclamation aloud.

The inmate is asked if they have any last words. Some do and some don't.

How does Florida execute those on death row?

"I want to thank the good people of the Sunshine State for killing me in the most cold, calculated, clean, humane, efficient way possible. I have no complaint," said Edward Zakrzewski, executed in July 2025 for killing his wife and children.

Glen Edward Rogers, a suspected serial killer convicted of killing a Florida woman he met in a bar, said just before his May 2025 execution that "in the near future, your questions will be answered" and added, "President Trump, keep making America great. I'm ready to go."

Moments after this, the drugs begin to flow into the inmate's arm. Florida uses a three-drug cocktail for its lethal injection: a sedative, a paralytic and a drug that stops the heart, according to the Corrections Department.

The executioner is a private citizen who is paid \$200 for the job. Their names are kept anonymous by state law.

Not many people know inmates can still request execution by an electric chair that was installed in 1999. It has never been used, although past executions until 2000 were conducted using the “Old Sparky” electric chair [originally built in 1923](#).

Florida's execution procedure is nearly identical each time

As the injection continues, inmates will typically take deep, heaving breaths with twitching movements in their arms and legs. Once it appears the inmate is deceased, one of the corrections officers will shake him by the shoulders and repeat his name loudly.

Then, in comes a white-coated doctor to verify the inmate is dead. Once that's done, an officer will announce that the “sentence of the court” was carried out at the specific time. It usually takes just 15 or 20 minutes after the curtain comes up.

The journalists are then shuttled back to the media tent, located a few hundred yards from an open field where a few dozen anti-death penalty activists usually gather to protest the execution. That's when we can grab our cellphones and file the execution update.

Family members of the murder victims get a chance then to talk to the gathered media. Some choose not to, but usually at least one person is designated to talk about what the execution means to them.

Some family members are relieved but still feeling pain

“It's done. Basically, justice for Janet happened,” said Julie Andrew, the sister of Janet Acosta after witnessing the April 2025 execution of her killer Michael Tanzi. “My heart felt lighter and I can breathe again.”

Darran Johnson, brother of murder victim Renee Flaherty, said the May 2025 execution of her killer and that of her children, Jeffrey Glen Hutchinson, that he felt

relief but said the pain will never end.

“Not a day goes by that we don’t think about the loved ones that were taken from us,” Johnson said.

The 10 Florida executions I covered in 2025

- **James Dennis Ford**, 64. Executed Feb. 13, 2025. Convicted of killing Gregory Philip Malnory and Kimberly Ann Malnory in Charlotte County on April 6, 1997, witnessed by their young daughter who survived.
- **Edward James**, 63. Executed March 20, 2025. Convicted of raping and killing 8-year-old Toni Neuner and her grandmother, Betty Dick, 58, on Sept. 19, 1993 in Casselberry.
- **Michael Tanzi**, 48. Executed April 8, 2025. Convicted of abducting and killing Miami Herald employee Janet Ocosta on April 25, 2000 while she was on a lunch break. Her body was found in the Florida Keys.
- **Jeffrey Glenn Hutchinson**, 62. Executed May 1, 2025. The former Army Ranger was convicted of the Sept. 11, 1998 shotgun slayings in Crestview of his girlfriend Renee Flaherty and her three children: 9-year-old Geoffrey, 7-year-old Amanda, and 4-year-old Logan.
- **Glen Edward Rogers**, 62. Executed May 5, 2025. Convicted of the Nov. 5, 1995 stabbing death of Tina Marie Cribbs after they met at a Gibsonton bar. Known as the “Cross Country Killer,” Rogers was also sentenced to die for a California murder and was a suspect at least three other killings.
- **Anthony Floyd Wainwright**, 54. Executed June 10, 2025. After escaping a North Carolina prison, convicted of the April 27, 1994 rape and murder in Lake City of nursing student and mother Carmen Gayheart.
- **Edward Zakrzewski**, 60. Executed July 31, 2025. Convicted of the June 9, 1994, killings of his wife Sylvia and their children Edward, 7, and Anna, 5, in Okaloosa County amid a contentious divorce.
- **Curtis Lee Windom**, 59. Executed Aug. 28, 2025. Convicted of the Nov. 7, 1992, killings of girlfriend Valerie Davis, her mother Mary Lubin, and Johnnie

Lee in the Orlando area.

- **David Joseph Pittman**, 63. Executed Sept. 17, 2025. Convicted of the May 15, 1990 killings of his estranged wife's parents, Clarence and Barbara Knowles, and their daughter Bonnie Knowles.
- **Bryan Frederick Jennings**, 66. Executed Nov. 13, 2025. Convicted of the May 11, 1979 abduction and killing of 6-year-old Rebecca Kunash in Brevard County.

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