



PCFIT

Pierce County Force Investigation Team



Press Release

Pierce County Sheriff's Department Officer Involved Shooting 1/25/2021

Meridian Terrace Mobile Home Park

Weekly information:

Pierce County, WA February 18th, 2021: Active investigation, no updates to report.

Pierce County, WA February 11th, 2021: Active investigation, no updates to report.

Pierce County, WA February 4th, 2021:

PCFIT investigators have interviewed all of the witnesses to this incident and have obtained statements from the involved officers on this incident. The following is a summary of the combined officer statements:

The deputies clearly understood they were responding to a domestic violence incident where it was known that a firearm had been in use and was not yet safely secured. Of the three deputies, one was equipped with a rifle, the other deputies remained equipped with the tools on their duty belt and uniform. After a search on foot of the trailer park, the deputies were able to locate the RV where the domestic violence incident was still ongoing. While knocking on the outside of the trailer, they attempted to gain verbal contact with the subjects inside the trailer with announcements of "Pierce County Sheriff's Department" and "come out". Through a window, they were able to see a younger man pushing an older man. They were also able to hear someone crying out for help, saying that they heard a voice yelling something similar to "he's going to grab a gun..." and, "he is going to kill me." They yelled for the younger male to come out with his hands up. There continued to be loud yelling and "banging" noises coming from inside the trailer indicating that there was likely an ongoing assault happening.

The deputies formulated a plan to enter the trailer to intervene in what they thought was an ongoing physical assault. The deputies attempted to gain entry to the trailer but the only door was locked. They could hear someone inside yelling, demanding to know where his gun was at. The deputies, fearing that someone's life was in danger, broke out the window to the trailer door to attempt to unlock the door to gain entry. As they did so, they heard loud noises moving towards the door so they attempted to step back. As they did so, a male rushed out the door in what was described as similar

to a “bull rushing out”. They described what appeared to be large knives in both hands which were being swung around. He came down the stairs, turning towards the nearest deputy who was alone near the end of the trailer and quickly advanced on him. The other two deputies were behind the male putting the deputies in a potential crossfire situation, with no safe way to intervene. Realizing this, they moved to the side to attempt to get cover as they could see the one remaining deputy engaging with the man with verbal commands. The lone deputy at the end of the trailer said he could clearly see what appeared to be a knife like object in one hand as he rushed at him. He said that the man’s hands were “flailing around making wild slashing movements” and he was yelling “incoherently.” He gave verbal commands to the man and tried to safely back up as fast as he could. The deputy, armed with a rifle, was in a confined narrow corridor outside the trailer. The deputy indicated he feared for his life and thought that the man was going to hurt or kill him as he was gaining distance on him. He did his best to move to one side to eliminate cross fire hazards and fired his rifle at the male. The male continued to advance on the deputy so he fired again until the male stopped advancing and fell to the ground. The male still had a knife in his hand but was not responding to commands to drop it. They approached him and kicked the knife from his hand and began efforts to render medical aid. They continued with medical aid until other deputies arrived and relieved them of those duties.

PCFIT scene investigators recovered a 13 inch carving knife and a 9.5 inch two pronged carving fork at the scene near the deceased male. Two firearms were recovered from inside the trailer.

The Pierce County Sheriff’s Department does not have body cameras nor in car video. No other recordings of the incident were located after a canvass of the area.

Also, several details were learned after the incident from the older male that had called 911. He told investigators that the younger male had fired the pistol outside the trailer prior to the officer’s arrival. The older male then took the pistol away and hid it. The younger male had also made statements that he was going to make the officers shoot him. None of this information was communicated to the 911 call taker, the officers would have been and were unaware.

The Pierce County Sheriff’s department has identified the deputies as:

Involved:

Deputy Aaron Aguilar, 27 years of age
Date of hire with PCSD 9/21/20 (4 months)
Formerly with Seattle PD 10/15/2018-9/20/2020 (1 year 11 months)

Witness:

Deputy Jerry Babcock, 36 years of age
Date of hire with PCSD 9/21/20 (4 months)
Formerly with Seattle PD 12/24/2015-9/20/2020 (4 years 8 months)

Witness:

Deputy Robert Copodonna, 28 years of age
Date of hire with PCSD 9/21/20 (4 months)
Formerly with Seattle PD 6/18/2018 -9/20/2020 (2 years 3 months)

PCFIT forensic personnel will be sending evidentiary items to the state crime lab for analysis, it is anticipated that results will not be back for several months. It is not anticipated that there will be any significant updates to relay in weeks to come.

Any questions regarding the ongoing investigation can be sent to:

Lt. Chris Westby
Lakewood Police Department Criminal Investigations Unit
(253) 830-5088
CWestby@CityofLakewood.us

Pierce County, WA January 26th 2021:

At about 2306 hours on 1/25/2021 Pierce County Deputies arrived at a domestic violence incident at the Meridian Terrace Mobile Home Park in the area of 194th and Meridian. They had been dispatched to the report of a father and adult son who had been in a dispute. Per the caller, the son had armed himself with a .22 caliber pistol and was outside waving it around. The caller also told dispatch that the pistol had been taken away and hidden from the son. The caller said that the son was repeatedly entering and exiting the trailer to look for the pistol. Dispatchers noted they could hear the son shouting at his father.

Deputies arrived and attempted contact with the caller. Soon after the deputies advised dispatch that they had contacted an “uncooperative male”. Shortly after, the deputies reported that shots had been fired, all deputies were unharmed and that the male had a knife. They called for medical aid informing dispatch that the male had been shot in the chest. Medical aid was rendered but the male was pronounced deceased at the scene by medical aid personnel.

Per Pierce County protocol, the Pierce County Force Investigation Team was called out to investigate this deadly force incident. Investigative staff from the Lakewood Police Department as well as the Puyallup Police Department responded to investigate.

Initial investigation at the scene indicates that the elderly male and his son were in fact in a heated domestic dispute inside their trailer. At some point a firearm was brandished in the incident prior to the deputies arriving. When deputies arrived they attempted contact at which point the adult son exited the trailer armed with at least one knife or edged weapon and confronted deputies. Shots were fired by one deputy that incapacitated the male. He was quickly detained, assessed for injuries and medical aid was administered. The male died from his injuries on scene despite lifesaving efforts. Firearms and a knife were recovered from the scene.

All involved deputies have been contacted by members of PCFIT and follow up continues on this case. Additional updates will follow as the case progresses.

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