



BAKERSFIELD POLICE DEPARTMENT PRESS RELEASE

William Rector, Chief of Police

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For Immediate Release

Thursday, June 25, 2009

There will be a press conference today at 11:00 a.m., in the Chiefs Conference room at the Bakersfield Police Department regarding the in custody death of RODOLFO LEPE which occurred on 1/11/09.

The following information is the result of an investigation conducted by the Bakersfield Police Department into the death of Rodolfo Lepe, 31, of Bakersfield, on January 11, 2009.

On January 8th, a relative of Rodolfo Lepe called Bakersfield police to her home because she had seen Rodolfo Lepe chasing her dog with a shovel. Rodolfo Lepe displayed a blank stare and repeated, "He's dead, he's dead." The officers tried to make contact with Rodolfo Lepe, but he hid in his house and would not respond. The officers left without making contact.

On January 11th, the same relative noticed Rodolfo Lepe walking around outside her home. This scared her because Rodolfo Lepe rarely left his residence. She was also familiar with Lepe's history of mental illness and crimes of violence. She sent her sister and her children into the bathroom to hide and watched as Rodolfo Lepe walked up and down the street, acting in a bizarre fashion. Rodolfo Lepe was talking to himself and jumping as if he was being startled. At one point, she saw Rodolfo Lepe walking toward an older woman who was walking to her mailbox. The relative was frightened for the older woman and called the Bakersfield Police Department about 4:00 PM to report Rodolfo Lepe's behavior.

Officers responded and spoke to the relative, who told them about Rodolfo Lepe's history and behavior. She told the officers she believed Rodolfo Lepe was both suicidal and homicidal.

The officers requested additional officers to assist and called for an evaluator from Kern County Mental Health's MET team. The officers heard a series of very loud banging noises from inside Rodolfo Lepe's house. The officers entered Rodolfo Lepe's house to check his welfare.

The officers found Rodolfo Lepe hiding in a closet. The officers identified themselves upon contact with Rodolfo Lepe and ordered him to cooperate but he refused to do so. The officers tried to force their way into the closet where Lepe was hiding but he fought violently. Lepe growled at the officers, threatened to kill them, and said, "You don't exist."

Officers tried more than once to use Tasers to subdue Lepe but he pulled the darts from his body and continued to fight. A lengthy fight ensued during which Lepe struck officers, causing injury to two of them, and dragged them to the ground. Lepe also grabbed at an officer's pistol and tried to pull an activated Taser from an officer's hand.

Officers called for additional help. The officers struck Lepe several times in response to his attempts to grab their weapons and bite and kick them. The officers were eventually able to handcuff Rodolfo Lepe and apply a strap to restrain his legs. They informed the police dispatcher that the suspect was in custody and requested medical aid.

As the officers awaited medical aid, one of the officers noticed Lepe had stopped breathing and was unresponsive. The officers began CPR and continued until the arrival of emergency medical services. Lepe was transported to a local hospital, where he was declared dead.

The involved officers suffered bruises, swelling, and facial injuries.

At the direction of Chief of Police Bill Rector, the Bakersfield Police Department Investigations Division and Internal Affairs detail conducted detailed investigations into Lepe's death. The investigations included a detailed examination of the incident scene and of the Tasers and other equipment used by the officers that day, as well as recorded interviews with Lepe's family and neighbors and the involved officers. The investigation has recently concluded with the issuance of the report of the Kern County Coroner.

The Bakersfield Police Department is committed to providing the community we serve with an open, thorough, and fair investigation of this very serious matter. All of the investigative reports and information will be reviewed by a Critical Incident Review Board composed of department command staff. In addition, all

reports and information will be forwarded to the Kern County District Attorney's Office for independent review.

The involved officers are identified as:

Officer Brian Holcombe

Officer David Brooks

Officer Jess Beagley

Officer Raelynn Aguayo

Officer Gilbert Rodriguez

Officer Adam Ketchum

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