



SAN DIEGO COUNTY SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT

Critical Incident Review Board

In-Custody Death Information Release

DATE OF INCIDENT: November 23, 2021

TIME: 2:43 p.m.

LOCATION: Tri-City Medical Center

The Sheriff's Homicide Unit conducts a thorough investigation of every in-custody death. In addition to the investigation conducted by the Sheriff's Homicide Unit, the Sheriff's Critical Incident Review Board (CIRB) conducts a review of in-custody deaths. The CIRB is comprised of department leadership and the Sheriff's Legal Advisor and performs a critical review of each incident. The focus of the CIRB is to assess the department's civil exposure because of a given incident. The review may identify potential misconduct, criminal negligence or behavior, policy violations, training deficiencies, or other areas where we can improve and make our facilities safer for staff and those in our custody. This release synthesizes the reviewed incident and any resultant actions taken to improve our operations.

On November 6, 2021, Incarcerated Person Earl Smith experienced medical distress while housed at the Vista Detention Facility. Following an examination by Sheriff's medical staff, Smith was transported to the Tri-City Medical Center. Diagnostic tests at the hospital revealed Smith was COVID-19 positive. He was subsequently admitted as a patient into the hospital.

On November 20, 2021, Smith's condition continued to decline and he was transferred to the Intensive Care Unit at the hospital. His condition worsened due to COVID-19 related health issues. Despite the efforts of Sheriff's medical staff and hospital staff, a doctor pronounced Earl Smith deceased on November 23, 2021, at 2:43 p.m.

As is the protocol for all in-custody deaths, the San Diego Sheriff's Homicide Unit investigated this incident and documented the scene.

The San Diego County Medical Examiner's Office conducted an independent investigation and post-mortem. The Medical Examiner's Office determined the cause of death to be "complications of COVID-19," and the manner of death to be "natural." (ME Case #2021-03914)

The CIRB conducted a review of this incident on April 20, 2022, with no action items or policy recommendations at that time.