

Skagit-Island Multiple Agency Response Team

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MEDIA RELEASE

For Immediate Release:

Case #: 22-ST0002
Date: February 21, 2022
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UPDATE: 2/21/2022 4:00pm

Skagit County - SMART is sending out this release as an update regarding independent investigation into the death of 51-year-old David A. Babcock of Concrete, WA. Mr. Babcock succumbed to his injuries at St. Joseph's Hospital in Bellingham.

The Whatcom County Medical Examiner conducted a medical examination today and determined the cause of death to be a gunshot wound to the head classifying it as homicide. By legal definition, "homicide" is the killing of a human being by the act, procurement, or omission of another, with death occurring at any time. It can be classified in different ways to include (1) murder, (2) homicide by abuse, (3) manslaughter, (4) excusable homicide, or (5) justifiable homicide.

SMART Investigators spent the remainder of last week securing and documenting incident events. This included scene mapping, measurements, and imagery. The involved vehicle is in a secure evidence facility for processing and examination.

Search warrants will be sought this week and investigators have requested the Washington State Patrol Crime Scene Response Team for assistance due to their expertise. Detectives also secured police body worn camera footage, statements from witnesses and canvassed the neighboring community.

At this stage, investigators have been able to determine that the suspect was travelling south on Fruitdale Road approaching McGargile Road. Officers were off the roadway near McGargile Road as the suspect vehicle approached. The vehicle left the roadway driving toward the officer's location when the shooting occurred. It's too early for conclusions as to why the driver took these actions or the resulting weapon discharge by police.

These are complex investigations with many pieces of evidence to consider. Independent Investigation Teams (IIT) such as SMART are comprised of Detectives and Command Staff from multiple agencies. When called into

action the first step in the investigative process is to separate all from the process who represent the involved agencies.

Washington State Law outlines specific requirements for independent investigations involving police including how the sharing of investigative information is to occur. This includes contacting citizen representatives who have been trained to understand the requirements, verifying investigating officers do not have a conflict of interest, notification of family and assigning a liaison. IIT's are required to determine if the involved is a member of a recognized tribe if so, a tribal liaison must be assigned.

With the passage of [Washington State Initiative 940](#) in 2018, and [Substitute House Bill 1064](#) in 2019, incidents where the use of deadly force by a peace officer results in death, substantial bodily harm, or great bodily harm require an independent investigation. This investigation must be conducted in the same manner as a criminal investigation and state law now requires an "independent investigation" completely independent of the involved agency.

These are the preliminary requirements that must be in place prior to any release of information to the public. Citizen representatives, family and tribal liaisons are contacted and provided an opportunity to review all press releases before they are disseminated.

It takes time, requires thoroughness and patience for these investigations to be done properly. Ultimately, all evidence and information collected will be submitted to the Skagit County Prosecutor who will determine the legality of actions for all involved.

The Skagit-Island Multiple Agency Response Team remains committed to a process that promotes public trust through independence, transparency, communication and credible investigative methods.

UPDATE: 2/17/2022 4:30pm

On Wednesday, February 16, 2022 at approximately 11:19PM Mount Vernon PD attempted to execute a traffic stop for a possible stolen vehicle at College Way and Interstate 5. The vehicle failed to stop and entered northbound Interstate 5. Mount Vernon PD disengaged the traffic stop when the vehicle fled.

A Skagit County Deputy located the suspect vehicle moving and at approximately 11:46PM Sedro Woolley PD Officers attempted to reengage the vehicle at N Fruitdale Rd and McGarigle Rd. Four Officers were on scene and the preliminary information is one Sedro Woolley Officer discharged his firearm. The suspect is a 51 year old Concrete resident who was airlifted to St. Joseph's Hospital in Bellingham.

The Critical Incident protocol was enacted and the Skagit and Island County Multiple Agency Response Team (SMART), which is comprised of detectives from Skagit and Island County law enforcement agencies, was called to investigate. Community representatives and a family liaison have been identified as required by WAC 139. The investigation is ongoing.

INITIAL RELEASE: 2/17/2022 2:30pm (Approximately)

On Wednesday, February 16, 2022, at approximately 11:19pm, the Skagit-Island Multiple Agency Response Team was activated at the request of the Sedro Woolley Police Department to investigate an officer involved shooting incident.

The Washington State Legislature enacted WAC 139-12-030 (2019) establishing requirements for how agencies conduct independent investigation's involving police deadly force use. The intent was to enhance public trust and investigation integrity by providing independence, transparency, communication, a credible process, and credible investigators performing that process.

Within these requirements, the Independent Investigation Team (S.M.A.R.T.) is required to have Citizen Representatives assigned, Family Liaison Representatives for the involved families, determine if Tribal membership is associated and assign a Tribal Liaison accordingly. These are required before we are able to release investigation progress to the public.

SMART is currently working to fill these requirements and this is the reason for a delay in sharing investigative progress publicly. This, however, is not delaying critical investigative work.

Additionally, the law requires SMART's investigation remain totally separate from the involved agency (Sedro Woolley) including the sharing of any investigation information with them until the case is filed with a prosecutor.

We recognize this could be confusing and may even give an appearance of judgment about a case because the Involved Agency and the Skagit-Island Multiple Agency Response Team are sharing information differently when the public asks questions. This is not the intent nor inference that should be taken. Any information provided by the involved agency will come from sources separate from our investigation.

Skagit-Island Multiple Agency Response Team is committed to a credible process that complies with Washington State law.