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Man talked of suicide before standoff in NLR

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Article Text:

A 37-year-old man who apparently killed himself during a seven-hour standoff with North Little Rock police on Tuesday told family members earlier that he wanted to commit suicide, police said.

Billy McCurley shot himself inside the Park Lane Motel at 5517 MacArthur Drive in North Little Rock shortly before 10 p.m., police said. Relatives said McCurley - who suffered from depression and had stopped taking his medication - had recently disappeared.

McCurley was a Level 3 sexual offender, with a registered address on Grande Street in Little Rock, according to the state's sex offender registry Web site. The state identifies a Level 3 sex offender as someone who is likely to repeat the crime.

"He called family members on Tuesday and talked of suicide and told them where he was," said North Little Rock police spokesman Sgt. Terry Kuykendall. "They came to the police substation and told officers, who went over to the motel to make contact."

The standoff began about 3 p.m. at the motel, where McCurley had checked into a room at the rear of the horseshoe-shaped complex.

"Officers tried to make entry into the room, but retreated to safety after hearing a gunshot," Kuykendall said.

Police evacuated the motel and nearby businesses and blocked off MacArthur Drive. As the standoff continued, dozens of police officers, including the department's SWAT team, arrived, while across the road about a dozen members of McCurley's family sat on a hill.

Police negotiators tried to talk with McCurley, either through the motel room's phone or by yelling through the walls.

"He was real up and down - crying one minute and angry the next," Kuykendall said. "Several times during the standoff, officers heard gunshots from inside the room."

After several hours of attempts to talk McCurley out of the room, the police periodically fired tear gas into the room.

"We felt like if we could get him out of the room, we could take him into custody safely," Kuykendall said. "Officers were using the tear gas to try to force him to come out for air because we were concerned for his safety."

After the final tear gas canister was fired, around 9:30 p.m., officers were unable to make further contact with McCurley.

"About 15 minutes passed without us hearing anything from him," Kuykendall said. "When officers entered the room, they found him dead of a gunshot wound."

Kuykendall said McCurley said during the standoff that he didn't want to go back to prison.

On April 1, 1999, McCurley was placed on five years of probation and ordered to register as a sex offender after he pleaded guilty to first-degree sexual assault involving a 12-year-old girl,

court records show.

The girl initially told investigators that McCurley began abusing her when she was 7 years old, prosecutors said.

Three years later, after his arrest in 2002 on burglary and terroristic threatening charges, his probation was revoked and he was sentenced to six years in state prison.

He was paroled on Nov. 7, 2003, but was sent back to prison a little more than a year later for a parole violation. On Sept. 16, 2005, Mc-Curley was again released on parole from state prison.

McCurley's body was taken to the state Crime Laboratory for an autopsy, which will include toxicology tests.

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