

Dallas Morning News, The (TX)
July 13, 2005

Edition: COLLIN COUNTY
Section: METRO
Page: 10B

Teen dies two days after Taser shots

Tarrant County:

It's fourth death linked to device since November

Author: *DEBRA DENNIS; Staff Writer*

Article Text:

A Grapevine teenager died Tuesday, two days after Euless police say they shot the youth three times with a Taser while he was high on drugs.

Kevin Omas, 17, was critically injured when he was taken to John Peter Smith Hospital early Sunday.

Mr. Omas is the fourth person in Tarrant County since November to die after being shot with a Taser.

Final rulings haven't been made in Mr. Omas' death and a Fort Worth death last month. In two earlier deaths in Fort Worth, the medical examiner ruled that the victims died from cocaine intoxication.

The Tarrant County medical examiner's office is conducting an autopsy to determine how Mr. Omas died, officials said.

Euless police are also investigating the incident, Assistant Police Chief Harland Westmoreland said.

Through a hospital spokesman, Mr. Omas' family members declined to comment Tuesday.

Officers were called to a home in the 800 block of West Ash Lane about 4 a.m. Sunday after reports that Mr. Omas had overdosed, Chief Westmoreland said.

"The people who were with him are saying he ingested four hits of LSD and two tabs of ecstasy," Chief Westmoreland said. "He ingested them all at the same time, and that caused him to lose control."

Mr. Omas, police said, was belligerent and refused to obey police orders.

"He charged officers repeatedly," he said.

A supervisor who was on the scene fired all three shots. Tasers project small darts, delivering 50,000 volts of electricity with each shot, police said.

The first shot failed to stop Mr. Omas from charging officers.

"The Taser was the only way for us to get control," Chief Westmoreland said.

A second round from the Taser was fired after Mr. Omas stood and flailed his arms at officers. He was handcuffed after a third shot, and five officers were able to restrain him, police said.

"They were able to put him down after the third time," he said.

Mr. Omas was treated at the scene by paramedics and transported to the hospital, Chief Westmoreland said.

Criminal justice and medical experts have said most deaths associated with Tasers happen to victims with lethal amounts of drugs in their systems or those who are in poor health. Policing experts say that Tasers remain the best option for subduing people and that every nonlethal policing method will end in some deaths.

Fort Worth police are also awaiting autopsy results after a 35-year-old woman died 90 minutes after an officer shot her with a Taser.

Carolyn Daniels, 35, died last month at a Fort Worth hospital. Police used a Taser after she began attacking a vehicle and disobeying police orders. Ms. Daniels appeared to be intoxicated. A crack pipe was found in her possession, police said.

In April, Midland architect Eric Hammock, 43, led Fort Worth officers on a car and foot chase after trespassing on private property. Authorities said Mr. Hammock, who was in Fort Worth on business, tried to hit an officer before he was shot with the Taser. The medical examiner ruled the cause of death cocaine intoxication.

The first of the four deaths occurred in November, when Robert Guerrero, 21, died after being shot with a Taser by police. His cause of death also was listed as cocaine intoxication.

E-mail debdennis@dallasnews.com