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Section: Police Blotter

Police Shoot Man After Standoff

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Article Text:

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WASHINGTON COUNTY - Police shot and killed an Elkins-area man before dawn Saturday after a three-hour standoff.

Ralph "Steven" Burke, 55, was killed after firing at least one shot at police, but law enforcement agencies were not releasing the name of the officer who fired the fatal shot pending investigation.

The incident began about 1:15 a.m., in the midst of a thunderstorm, when Washington County deputies were dispatched to a residence at 21678 Mount Olive Road, east of Elkins near the Washington-Madison county line. A 911 caller reported a man with a gun, according to police press releases.

Deputies found Burke barricaded in a mobile home on the property. He was armed, apparently intoxicated, and had made threats to his wife and a child in a nearby house on the same property, said Deputy Jak Kimball.

One police report indicated that Burke fired shots from a rifle at county deputies early in the standoff, and then barricaded himself in the mobile home, Kimball said.

A woman was in the mobile home with Burke for a short time, but she exited quickly, Kimball said. She did not appear to be a hostage, and her relation to Burke was unknown, Kimball said. Deputies attempted to talk with Burke by telephone and cellular phone, while waiting outside through heavy rain, thunder and lightning.

Negotiators and the Emergency Response Team, a specialized squad of county deputies and municipal police officers from the Fayetteville Police Department, were called to the scene when deputies could not convince Burke to exit peacefully, Kimball said.

Burke died about 4:20 a.m., when a confrontation occurred, according to the press release. Kimball did not have any details of how the confrontation occurred, and Fayetteville police refused to comment on the incident.

Burke was hit by a single bullet fired by a member of the Emergency Response Team, Kimball said. The team planned to negotiate with Burke, but had not established formal contact when the confrontation occurred, Kimball said.

Burke was pronounced dead at the scene.

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