



KEN PAXTON

ATTORNEY GENERAL *of* TEXAS

CUSTODIAL DEATH REPORT

Agency Information

CDR Number: 19-1122-CJ

Version Type: AMENDED

Report Date: 2/24/2021 10:33
AM

Status: Submitted

Agency/Facility Information

Agency Name: Dewitt County
Sheriff's Dept.

Agency Address: 208 E. Live Oak

Agency City: Cuero

Agency State: TX

Agency Zip: 77954

Director Information

Director Salutation: Sheriff

Director First Name: Carl

Director Middle Name:

Director Last Name: Bowen

Reporter Name: Carl Bowen

Reporter Email: carl.bowen@dwcotx.org

Decedent Information

Identity of Deceased

First Name: Christopher

Middle Name: Lee

Last Name: Beck

Suffix:

Date of Birth: 8/4/1977

Sex: Male

Race: Anglo or White

Age At Time Of Death: 42

Date/Time of Custody (arrest, incarceration) (mm/dd/yyyy hh:mm AM/PM):

Date/Time of Custody or Incident: 9/30/2019 11:00 PM

Date/Time of Death (mm/dd/yyyy hh:mm AM/PM):

Death Date and Time: 10/1/2019 12:32 AM

Manner / Cause of Death

Has a medical examiner or coroner conducted an evaluation to determine a cause of death?

Medical Examiner/Coroner Evaluation?: Yes, results are available

What was the manner of death? (select only one)

Manner of Death: Natural

Medical Cause of Death:

Medical Cause of Death:

Acute Peritonitis due to perforated small bowel.

Had the decedent been receiving treatment for the medical condition that caused the death after admission to your jail's jurisdiction?

Medical Treatment: No

If death was an accident, homicide or suicide, who caused the death?

Who caused the death?: Not applicable

If a weapon caused the death, what type of weapon caused the death? (Hold CTRL to select all that apply)

Type of weapon that caused death?: Not Applicable

Was the cause of death the result of a pre-existing medical condition or did the decedent develop the condition after admission?

Pre existing medical condition?: Pre-existing medical condition

If death was an accident, homicide or suicide, what was the means of death?

Means of Death: Not applicable, cause of death was illness/natural cause

Location / Custody Information

Where did the event causing the death occur?

Street Address: 208 E LIVE OAK
ST

City: CUERO

County: DeWitt

Zip: 77954

What location category best describes where the event causing the death occurred?

Location Category: Law Enforcement
Facility

What type of custody/facility was the Decedent in at the time of death:

Type of Custody: County Jail

Specific type of custody/facility:

Specific Type of Custody/Facility:

Jail - holding cell

What was the time and date of the deceased's entry into the law enforcement facility where the death occurred (mm/dd/yyyy hh:mm AM/PM):

Entry Date Time: 9/28/2019 2:45 PM

Where did the death occur?

Death Location: Dead on arrival at
medical facility

General Information

Did any other law enforcement agencies respond to calls for service related to this incident?

Other Agencies Respond?: Yes

What were the most serious offense(s) with which the deceased was (or would have been) charged with at the time of death?

Offense 1:

Duty upon striking fixture Misd. B

Offense 2:

Failure to report incident Misd. C

Offense 3:

Were the Charges:: Filed

What were the types of charges or reason for contact? (Hold CTRL to select all that apply)

Type of Offense: Crime Against
Property

At any time during the incident and/or entry into the law enforcement facility, did the decedent display or use a weapon?

Decedent display/use of
weapons: No

At any time during the incident and/or entry into the law enforcement facility, did the decedent:

Attempt to Injure Others?: No

At any time during the incident and/or entry into the law enforcement facility, did the decedent:

Appear intoxicated (alcohol or
drugs): No

Make suicidal statements?: No

Exhibit any mental health
problems?: No

Exhibit any medical problems?: Yes

At any time during the incident and/or entry into the law enforcement facility, did the decedent:

Barricade self or initiate standoff?:	No	Resist being handcuffed or arrested?:	No
Physically attempt/assault officer(s):	No	Gain possession of officer's weapon:	No
Verbally threaten other(s) including law:	No	Escape or attempt to escape/flee custody:	No
Attempt gain possession officer's weapon:	No		

Was the deceased under restraint in the time leading up to the death or the events causing the death?

Under Restraint: No

Summary of Incident

Summary of How the Death Occurred: (max. 30,000 characters)

Summary:

INTRODUCTION:

On 10-01-2019 at 0032 hours, I was contacted by Chief Deputy John Garoni in reference to an in custody death, within the DeWitt County sheriff's Office Jail.

SCENE SUMMARY:

208 E. Liveoak St. Cuero, Texas 77954 is a brick and mortar building that houses the DeWitt County Sheriff's Office and DeWitt County Jail.

INITIAL INFORMATION:

On or about 2339 hours, 09-30-2019, I was informed of an in custody death of inmate Christopher Lee Beck. Upon my arrival at the Cuero Regional hospital emergency room, I met with Corporal Richter and Justice of the Peace Mayer who was conducting the inquest and ordered an autopsy for the deceased.

Corporal Richter informed me that Mr. Beck had begun to feel ill during the day and was subsequently moved to the booking area where he could be monitored. Mr. Beck was complaining of stomach cramping and had diarrhea.

Corporal Richter stated that during the regular cell checks it appeared that Mr. Beck was unresponsive and a closer check revealed Mr. Beck needed immediate medical attention.

Corporal Richter and Jailers began to assist Mr. Beck in lifesaving efforts; at 2343 hours, Cuero EMS arrived to the DeWitt County Jail in an effort to provide aid to Mr. Beck.

Mr. Beck was transported to the Cuero Regional Hospital emergency room for further treatment.

INVESTIGATOR ACTION:

Upon my arrival at the Cuero Regional Hospital emergency room, I met with Corporal Richter and Justice of the Peace Mayer who was conducting the inquest and ordered an autopsy for the deceased. I began by taking photographs of Mr. Beck, which will be included in this investigation report. Judge Mayer conducted her inquest and ordered an autopsy to be performed by the Travis County Medical Examiner's Office 7723 Springdale Rd. Austin, Texas 78724.

Victoria Mortuary was directed to take possession of the body and deliver it to the Travis County Medical Examiner's Office.

On 10-01-2019 at 0315 hours, Victoria Mortuary removed Mr. Beck and transported the body to Austin, Texas.

I met with Texas Ranger Drew Pilkington at the DeWitt County Sheriff's Office and provided him with documents and photographs in reference to this investigation.

We then went to the Jail area ED-1 where Mr. Beck was placed for observation and took photographs of the cell area for this investigation report.

Dr. Woods, provided evidence that consisted of a bag with two white socks, a bag with orange underwear and a bag containing green pants, belonging to Mr. Beck prior to examination.

On 10-01-2019 at 0333 hours, a teletype was sent to Calhoun County Sheriff's Office requesting a Death Notification be made to Stephanie Beck 558 Cr 310 Port Lavaca, Texas.

Confirmation came at 0450 hours; Sgt. Harris made contact with Stephanie Beck.

Ranger Pilkington and myself conducted the following interviews with inmates who were in the same cell prior to Mr. Beck's removal.

INMATE INTERVIEWS:

10-01-2019 0408 hours;

John Castillo Jr.

Mr. Castillo was in the B1B with Mr. Beck and explained that Mr. Beck would not eat, would not talk, was laying on his bunk, Mr. Castillo thought he was sick already, did not have any issues with anyone else in the cell.

10-01-2019 0424 hours;

Ray James Schultz

Mr. Schultz was in the same cell B1B with Mr. Beck and noticed that he looked sick, pale and at times was shaking as if he was ill. Mr. Schultz observed him stated he did look sick. Mr. Beck asked for medical attention and staff was attending to him. Mr. Schultz stated he observed Mr. Beck to foaming at the mouth when staff moved him out in the wheelchair. Mr. Schultz indicated that when Mr. Beck first came in he was eating fine, and then started eating less. Noticed he was on the toilet a lot, seemed like diarrhea. Mr. Schultz was asked how old did Mr. Beck look and he stated about 60 years old. Mr. Beck did tell others in the cell that he had pancreatic cancer and had some organs removed. Mr. Schultz indicated that staff did everything they were supposed to do.

10-01-2019 0437 hours;

Tyler Danish

Mr. Danish was in the same cell B1B and asked if he knew anything concerning Mr. Beck, Mr. Danish stated that Mr. Beck had indicated he would be coming down from oxytocin and Xanax, Mr. Danish stated well that just like coming down from heroin. Mr. Danish has experienced the effects of drug use and withdrawals associated with oxytocin and Xanax use. Mr. Danish felt Mr. Beck was over exaggerating the withdrawals but he did see him shaking and asking for help from staff because he did not feel well.

Mr. Danish recalls Mr. Beck stating that before his incident he and a person's wife had dropped the person off at the hospital because the person was overdosing, then he had a wreck. Mr. Danish did not have any concerns about staff not doing their jobs.

10-01-2019 0449 hours;

Martin Salas

Mr. Salas was in the same B1B cell as Mr. Beck and did not want to talk, however he did state that he felt Mr. Beck was going through withdrawals and was saying that he needed his meds, but it sounded like he needed something stronger than his meds. I did not pay too much attention to what went on; I was usually sleeping and minding my own business. Mr. Salas did not know how these people act so he could not tell if they were acting any different.

TEXAS COMMISSION ON JAIL STANDARDS NOTIFICATION:

On 10-01-2019 at 0454 hours, Texas Commission on Jail Standards was notified of the in custody Death of Mr. Beck via email.

TRAVIS COUNTY MEDICAL EXAMINERS OFFICE:

On 10-01-2019 at 0628 hours, Ranger Pilkington and I were contacted by the Travis County Medical Examiner's Office of the autopsy scheduled for Mr. Beck at approximately 0930 hours.

On 10-01-2019 at 1000 hours, Dr. Leisha Woods MD, began her autopsy of Mr. Beck. Upon conclusion of the autopsy Dr. Woods concluded with preliminary results were determined as Natural causes with Sepsis, multiple organ damage, Peritonitis from a perforated bowel at an old surgery site and internal infection.

Dr. Woods, provided evidence that consisted of a bag with two white socks, a bag with orange underwear and a bag containing green pants, belonging to Mr. Beck prior to examination.

STATEMENTS FROM JAIL STAFF:

The following statements from Jail staff were obtained from each staff member and included in this report.

Jailer William Reese;

On Monday, September 30, 2019 at approximately 2010 hours, per the monitor in the control room, when I was contacted via intercom by unit B1B there was an inmate sick in the unit. I then announced over the jail radio that an inmate needed to be checked in unit B1B.

Jailer Jeremy Torres #1266 responded to the unit to check on the inmate identified as Christopher Beck #35813 after a few minutes Jailer Torres left the unit. Within the next hour I received another call via intercom from B1B again stating that he was still sick and shaking. I then advised over the radio that an officer needed to go to B1B to check on Inmate Beck. Jailer Torres responded to the unit and he advised that Beck was complaining of chest pain and stomach pain. Jailer Torres advised to contact the nurse. I then contacted Nurse Jennifer with SHP and advised her of the situation, she advised that she had seen Inmate Beck earlier in the day in medical.

Nurse Jennifer advised that to check Beck's B/P and blood sugar every two hours. Sgt. Guajardo advised over the radio to place Beck in ED-1 for observation. Jailer Torres contacted the Sgt. via telephone to confirm putting Beck in ED-1. I then observed Jailer Torres take a wheelchair to unit B1B, he then exited the unit with Beck in the chair. Inmate Beck was then transported to the booking area and placed in cell ED-1. Prior to the later incident, I observed Inmate Beck sitting in the wheelchair looking out the window of the cell and the moving around the cell in the wheelchair. At approximately 2342 per monitor in control, Sgt. Guajardo called for cell ED-1 located in booking area to be opened. Upon entry, she checked on Inmate Beck, and then she called for Lt. William Riemenschneider to come to the cell.

At 2344, Lt. Riemenschneider advised to call EMS, I then advised dispatch via phone to contact EMS and to have them enter through the sallyport. Cpl. Ryan Richter #1262 responded to booking area to assist, he entered ED-1 and applied the AED system. At 2348, EMS arrived on scene, as they were retrieving the equipment and heard over the radio CPL. Richter stated that he was starting CPR. Emergency Medical Technicians entered the cell and took over CPR; Inmate Beck was placed on the gurney and placed in the ambulance. At 0004 hours, the ambulance left the sallyport enroute to the hospital. EOR

Corporal Ryan Richter;

On September 30, 2019 At Approx. 2339hrs, I Jail Corporal Ryan Richter notified Jail Sargent Melissa Guajardo and Jail Lieutenant William Riemenschneider Via radio of an Inmate in ED1 that was in need of medical attention notified I Jail Corporal Ryan Richter.

I, Cpl. Richter was in control at this time, so I took the A.E.D. (Automated External Defibrillator) with me to booking cell ED1. Upon arrival at approx. 2340hrs, Lt. Riemenschneider and Jailer Jeremy Torres where in the Process of Laying Inmate Christopher Lee Beck on the concrete floor. I checked for signs of breath or a pulse and did not find signs of either. I Cpl. Richter took scissors from Jailer Torres and cut the green uniform

top and a white tee shirt off inmate Beck. I tore open the pack and placed the two leads on Inmate Beck as instructed on the pads on the A.E.D pack.

I then plugged the leads into the A.E.D., turned the A.E.D. machine on and let it analyze. it advised me no shock and to start C.P.R.(Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation) at this time. At approx. 2344hrs, I Cpl. Richter began C.P.R. At Approx. 2345hrs, E.M.S. Arrived in cell ED1. Inmate Beck was placed on a stretcher and moved into the ambulance at approx. 2348hrs.

On October 1, 2019 At Approx. 0001hrs, I Cpl. Richter and the two E.M.T.'s left the Dewitt County Jail with Inmate Beck by Ambulance in route to Cuero Regional Hospital Emergency Room.

We arrived at Cuero Regional Hospital Emergency Room at Approx. 0004hrs where we were met by a team of medical professionals that took over and worked on Inmate Beck until approx. 0024hrs when he was pronounced dead. At Approx. 0045hrs Jail Captain Jerry Garza Picked myself Cpl. Richter up from Cuero Regional Hospital Emergency Room, where we were in route to the Dewitt County Jail when Dewitt County Chief Deputy John Garoni informed Cpt. Garza that Cpl. Richter needed stay with the deceased until the Justice of the Peace Arrives.

Cpt. Garza turned around at the corner of Broadway St. and Hwy 183 and drove back to Cuero Regional Hospital Emergency Room. Where I Cpl. Richter stayed with the deceased until Justice of the Peace Precinct 1 Peggy Mayer arrived and informed me that Victoria Mortuary would be picking up the deceased and transporting him to Travis County Medical Examiner's Office for an autopsy. At approx. 0315hrs, Victoria Mortuary arrived at Cuero Regional Hospital Emergency Room, loaded up the deceased, and left in route to Travis County Medical Examiner's Office.

Lt. William Reimenschneider;

At approximately 2340, Sgt. Guajardo called me to ED1. When I got there, she said she could not find a pulse on inmate Christopher Beck. I proceeded to grab Becks left wrist and try to find a pulse. I could not. However, I did observe that his wrist was colder than it should be.

We then tried to find a pulse in his neck. Tried both sided, no pulse. I then told Sgt. Guajardo to see if he was breathing. She stated that she did not think he was. I immediately radioed Control to get EMS here as fast as they could. We then moved Beck from the wheelchair to the green mattress on the floor.

By this time, Cpl. Richter was in the cell with the AED. He started working on Beck immediately. At this time, I went through EV2 and EV1 to await the arrival of the ambulance. Control already had the North Sally Port opened up so they could come right in. Once in, I informed them where the inmate was and what was going on.

Once in the cell, EMTs took over for Cpl. Richter. He was quickly loaded on the gurney and taken to the ambulance. Once in the ambulance, the two EMTs went to work on him while Cpl. Richter kept doing CPR. At this time, I went back to our office and called the Captain and Chief Garoni to inform them of what was happening. Capt. informed me that he was on his way and would be here in a while. Chief was notified of happenings. I told him I would call him back later with updates.

I then went back outside to the Sally Port to check on things. Sgt. Guajardo stated that nothing had changed. I then stepped out of the Sally Port and called Lt. Smith to inform him of the situation. Letting him know I would keep him informed of any changes. At this point, they closed the ambulance and left the Sally Port for Cuero Regional Hospital (CRH). The Sally Port was lowered. This was at 00:04. I then went back to the office and called Captain and Chief back to let them know he was on the way to CRH. By this time, Chief was already here in his office. Capt. was just getting into Cuero and headed straight to the hospital. At this time, I went to Control to pull up the video of ED1. I was trying to find out how long he was sitting in the wheelchair without moving before Sgt. Guajardo entered the cell.

The inmate was moved into ED1 from B1B around 2110. He was moved because he kept complaining of pain in his stomach. Sgt. Guajardo moved him so they could keep a better watch on him. According to the video, the inmate's final movement was around 2248. It appeared as if the inmate had finally fallen asleep in the wheelchair. At 2334, jailer Torres was doing his wand check. After finishing the run on the wand, he returned to talk to Sgt. Guajardo about the inmate.

This is when Sgt. Guajardo entered the cell and could not find a pulse on the individual.

Sgt. Melissa Guajardo;

On Monday, September 30, 2019 at approximately 2100 hours, I, Sgt. M. Guajardo #1250, overheard Jailer Torres call via radio for Control Officer W. Reese to contact Nurse Jennifer in regards to Inmate Christopher Beck.

I was aware that the individual was complaining of pain and not feeling well, so I insisted that he be taken down to Booking ED1 so that we could get a closer watch on him. Jailer J. Torres grabbed a wheelchair and took it down to B1B. I told Jailer Torres to get the individuals vitals before bringing him down to Booking. At approximately, 21:12 Inmate Beck was placed in ED1 by Jailer Torres. I continued to book in inmates that were brought in previously.

At approximately 23:35, as I was finishing up with fingerprints, I looked over and noticed that Inmate was sitting in the wheelchair with his head to the side. I assumed he was asleep by the way he was sitting there. I asked Jailer Torres why the wheelchair was in there and he stated that it was because the individual was unable to walk on his own. As soon as I completed the fingerprints, I went and looked for an observation form so that I could place it on ED1.

While placing the observation form, I felt something was not right so I called for control to open ED1. At approximately 23:37, I went in to ED1 to check on said inmate. I called his name, but he did not answer so I tried to move him. He was not responding so I started trying to find a pulse and to see if he was breathing but I could not tell. I then called for Lt. Riemenschneider to come down to Booking to assist me. Lt. Riemenschneider arrived to ED1 at approximately 23:38 to see what was going on. I advised him of the situation and he began to assist on checking for a pulse. He then called for Cpl. Richter to come and assist and also advised Control Officer Reese to contact Dispatch and have them send EMS as soon as possible.

At approximately 23:40, Jailer Torres arrived and assisted Lt. remove said inmate from chair. As they removed him, I pulled the wheelchair out of the way. Cpl. Richter arrived soon after with the A.E.D machine. Jailer Torres grabbed some scissors and helped Cpl. Richter remove said inmates shirts so that he could place A.E.D pads. As soon as A.E.D was done analyzing, Cpl. Richter started CPR. As soon as CPR was started, EMT's arrived to booking and took over CPR. At approximately 23:47, Inmate was placed on gurney and taken to ambulance all while Emergency Medical Technician's continued with CPR.

At approximately 0004 hours, EMS left for hospital with said Inmate along with Cpl. Richter.

Jailer Jeremy Torres;

On Monday, September 30, 2019 at approximately 2000 hours, I Jailer Jeremy Torres #1266 was notified via radio by control Jailer William Reese #1247 of an inmate experiencing unknown medical problems inside cell B1B. I Jailer Torres responded to the unit to check on the inmate later identified as Christopher Lee Beck #35813.

I entered B1B cell at 2042 according to jail surveillance and did have the body worn camera activated with audio and video recording. Inmate Beck was having trouble talking but stated he had chest pain and stomach pain. After talking with Beck other inmates inside B1B said he had already been checked by Nurse Jennifer earlier in the day. I do not know extent of medical evaluation as that did not occur on my shift.

I then exited the cell and notified Jailer Reese to contact jail nurse Jennifer and explain situation. Later on B1B called control again using the emergency button located inside their cell stating that same inmate was still not feeling well. Control Jailer Reese notified jail staff via radio that an available jailer needs to respond to B1B for welfare check on Inmate Beck. I jailer Torres responded to the unit and re-entered the cell at 2101.

Beck was still complaining of chest pain and stomach pain. I then notified Reese via radio to contact the nurse. Nurse Jennifer said to check Beck's blood pressure and blood sugar every two hours. Sgt. Melissa Guajardo #1250 advised over the radio to place Beck in ED1. I jailer Torres contacted Sgt. Guajardo via telephone in control to confirm the rehousing of inmate Beck from B1B to ED1. ED1 has a camera facing inside the cell that can be monitored by the control jailer 24 hours a day.

I jailer Torres went to booking to get a wheelchair for Beck to sit in for his safety while I transport him to ED1 which is located in booking. I entered the cell with the wheelchair at 2108 hours. I was on the wand and as per jail policy, we observe all inmates every 15 minutes 24 hours a day. While on the wand, I observed Inmate Beck sitting in the wheel chair and wheeling himself around inside the cell.

Per surveillance, video Beck was facing a different direction in the cell and moving around in the cell. At approximately 2330 hours, Sgt. Guajardo called for ED1 cell door to be opened. When she entered, she checked on Inmate Beck, Sgt. Guajardo also radioed for Lt. William Riemenschneider #1242 to come and assist her at the cell. At approximately 2330 hours, Lt. Riemenschneider advised control Jailer Reese to call EMS.

Cpl. Ryan Richter #1262 responded to booking area to assist, he entered ED1 and applied the AED. (Automated External Defibrillator) Cpl. Richter administered CPR. Paramedics arrived at the jail, entered the jail sallyport, then entered ED1 and took over CPR. Inmate Beck was placed on the gurney and taken by Cuero EMS to Cuero Regional Hospital at 0001.

ATTACHMENT:

Call for service #016965-19
Written statement from Jailer William Reese
Written statement from Lt. William Riemenschneider
Written statement from Sgt. Melissa Guajardo
Written statement from Cpl. Ryan Richter
Written statement from Jailer Jeremy Torres
Query from National Crime Information Center for Christopher Lee Beck
Email notification to Texas Commission on Jail Standards
Travis County Medical Examiners Property release
Teletype Death notification sent to Calhoun County Sheriff's Office
DeWitt County Jail Roster of inmates in B1B on 09-30-2019
Cuero Regional Hospital medical record performed by Dr. Helfrich
Guard 1 time keeping system printout
DeWitt County Jail Diet printout for 09-30-2019
JP-1 Peggy Mayer (Request Investigation Report)
DeWitt County Jail Booking Report/Medical
DeWitt County jail packet
Call for service #016817-19 dated 09-28-2019
Call for service #016807-19 dated 09-28-2019
1 thumb drive with video footage of ED1
Compact Disc tagged 19-0436 Photographs Emergency Room
Compact Disc tagged 19-0436 Photographs ED-1
Compact Disc tagged 19-0436 John Castillo interview
Compact Disc tagged 19-0436 Ray Schultz interview
Compact Disc tagged 19-0436 Tyler Danish interview
Compact Disc tagged 19-0436 Martin Salas interview

BRIEF SYNOPSIS:

On 10-01-2019 at 0032 hours, I was contacted by Chief Deputy John Garoni in reference to an in custody death, within the DeWitt County sheriff's Office Jail, further investigation via preliminary autopsy Dr. Woods concluded that preliminary results were determined as Natural causes with Sepsis, multiple organ damage, Peritonitis from a perforated bowel at an old surgery site and internal infection.

DISPOSITION:

This case will remain open pending further investigation from Texas Ranger Drew Pilkington.

REPORT COMPLETED BY:

Lt. Richard Ramirez

DISPOSITION UPDATE:

On 11/06/2020, Texas Ranger Drew Pilkington concluded his investigation. He refers to the Travis County Medical Examiner's autopsy report by Dr. Leisha Wood MD. She states it is her opinion that decedent died a natural death as a result of acute peritonitis due to perforated small bowel ulceration. she also mentions that the perforation was the result of a duodenal ulcer.

Ranger Pilkington notes that he has not found any information or evidence of criminal intent by any DeWitt County Sheriff's Office personnel nor any other individual whom Beck may have come in contact with at the DeWitt County Sheriff's Office Jail.

Chief Deputy John V. Garoni