



# KEN PAXTON

## ATTORNEY GENERAL *of* TEXAS

### CUSTODIAL DEATH REPORT

## Agency Information

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CDR Number: 21-1399-CJ

Version Type: ORIGINAL  
VERSION

Report Date: 10/19/2021 4:23  
PM

Status: Submitted

## Agency/Facility Information

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Agency Name: Van Zandt County  
Sheriff's Dept.

Agency Address: 1220 W. Hwy 64

Agency City: Canton

Agency State: TX

Agency Zip: 75103

## Director Information

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Director Salutation: Sheriff

Director First Name: STEVE

Director Middle Name:

Director Last Name: HENDRIX

Reporter Name: Joe Maddox

Reporter Email: jmaddox@vanzandtcountry.org

## Decedent Information

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## Identity of Deceased

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First Name: James

Middle Name: Dale

Last Name: King

Suffix:

Date of Birth: 5/20/1983

Sex: Male

Race: Anglo or White

Age At Time Of Death: 38

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

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Date/Time of Custody or Incident: 10/14/2021 9:55 AM

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

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Death Date and Time: 10/14/2021 10:24 AM

## Manner / Cause of Death

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

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

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

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Manner of Death: Suicide

Medical Cause of Death:

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Medical Cause of Death:

Asphyxiation by hanging

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

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Medical Treatment: Yes

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

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Who caused the death?: Decedent

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

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Type of weapon that caused death?: Other Weapon, specify:

Other weapon, specify:

Bed sheet tied around decedent neck

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

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Pre existing medical condition?: Not Applicable; cause of death was accidental injury, intoxication, suicide or homicide

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

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Means of Death: Hanging, strangulation

## Location / Custody Information

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Where did the event causing the death occur?

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Street Address: 1220 W. Dallas  
Street

City: Canton

County: Van\_Zandt

Zip: 75103

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

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Location Category: Law Enforcement  
Facility

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

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Type of Custody: County Jail

Specific type of custody/facility:

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Specific Type of Custody/Facility:

Jail - single 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):

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Entry Date Time: 10/12/2021 5:12  
PM

Where did the death occur?

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Death Location: Scene of incident

## General Information

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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:

Burglary of a building

Offense 2:

Burglary of a building

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): Yes

Make suicidal statements?: No

Exhibit any mental health  
problems?: No

Exhibit any medical problems?: No

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: | Unknown | Escape or attempt to escape/flee custody: | No |
| Attempt gain possession officer's weapon: | N/A     |                                           |    |

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:

Case # 21-20304

On Thursday, October 14, 2021 at approximately 1006 hours, Lieutenant Joe Maddox was notified by Chief Deputy Shelton of a custodial death in the Van Zandt County Jail located at 1220 W. Dallas Street, Canton, Van Zandt County, Texas 75103. Lieutenant Joe Maddox had CID Sergeants Snell and Wolstencroft with him at the time. They immediately responded to the location. Upon arrival at the jail at approximately 1022 hours, they were advised that the inmate was in Cell # 7. Lt. Maddox rushed to Cell # 7, at which time Lt. Maddox observed two Canton City Firemen, Bryan McAteer and Dillon Jackson assisting EMS Ambulance # M14 of Trinity Mother Francis Medics Vanessa Upchurch and Connor Gallagher with life saving measures on an inmate. Lt. Maddox further observed the medical team working on a tall white male who was balding with a light grayish red beard wearing an orange inmate style jumpsuit and orange slides. There were AED leads and pads attached to the inmate on his chest, an intubation tube in his mouth and a central IV line in his right leg below the knee. Lt. Maddox further observed a deep ligature mark more toward the left side of the neck of the inmate. Under his neck on the floor was a partial white bed sheet that appeared to have been cut, which was most likely the device utilized to cause the ligature mark around the neck of the inmate. As Lt. Maddox looked up on the cell pod partition, he observed another portion of white bed sheet tied in a knot around the bars of the partition approximately six feet from the ground that had clear cut marks at the bottom.

Within Cell # 7 was six individual pods or bunks with four on the left and two on the right. The four on the left start from front to back as Pod A, Pod B, Pod C and Pod D. On the right side was Pod F and the front and Pod E at the back, which was the Pod that the inmate was currently unresponsive in.

At that point in time, Lt. Maddox observed Van Zandt County Justice of the Peace Judge Plaster, Captain Jerry Wood, Sheriff Hendrix, Chief Deputy Shelton, Jail Administrator Lt. Harrelson, Patrol Lt. Williams,

Deputy Hiser and Jailer Zubl all present in the cell. Sergeant Wolstencroft and Sergeant Snell arrived in the cell with Lt. Maddox, at which time he instructed Sgt. Wolstencroft to begin obtaining written affidavits from all attending staff and jail employees. Lt. Maddox then instructed Sgt. Snell to begin taking evidence photographs of the scene to document the scene. At approximately 1024 hours, the medics were unsuccessful in obtaining any signs of life from the inmate, at which time JP2 Judge Plaster provided the official time of death as 1024 hours.

Lt. Maddox learned that the inmate and decedent was James Dale King m/w/05/20/1985 with NC-DL# 000021765175 and SS# 238-53-3471. Decedent King had been arrested on October 12, 2021 by Canton PD at the address of 229 VZCR 3829 in Wills Point, Van Zandt County, Texas 75169 for outstanding warrants, where he was transported to the Van Zandt County Jail for custodial housing.

Lt. Maddox observed King to be in the floor laying face up with his head facing the doorway to the cell and his feet to be partially under the bed framing on the far wall. Lt. Maddox observed Decedent King to have the beginning stages of lividity around his neck area and on the bottom sides of his legs and arms.

By all apparent accounts of the scene, it appeared to be an intentional suicide by Inmate King.

Lt. Maddox learned that the jail hall was assigned to Detention Officer Ramsey, who conducted cell checks on Cell # 7 throughout the morning and the last time Inmate King was seen up and walking around was at approximately 0730 hours on the listed date.

Judge Plaster stated that at approximately 0945 hours, she, Deputy Hiser and Detention Officer Zubl went to Cell # 7 to conduct an arraignment via the view window on two new charges that were being added to Inmate King. They opened the bean hole to call for Inmate King, but there was no response from him. Deputy Hiser called out for Inmate King, but still no response was gained. At approximately 0953 hours, Detention Officer Ramsey, Detention Officer Zubl and Deputy Hiser entered the cell, while Deputy Hiser and Detention Officer Zubl held the two outer doors as Detention Officer Ramsey entered the cell. Once in the cell, Detention Officer Ramsey located Inmate King suspended from a bed sheet tied around his neck to the roll-down door within Cell 7E. Deputy Hiser and Detention Officer Zubl entered the cell and attempted to get Inmate King down. At approximately 0955 hours, Detention Officer Zubl summoned an ambulance via the control room, then he entered the cell again and attempted to untie the knot, at which time Deputy Hiser told him that he had a knife in his front left pocket. Detention Officer Zubl obtained the knife and attempted to cut Inmate King down as Detention Officer Ramsey and Deputy Hiser held Inmate King up, relieving pressure from his neck. Nurse Lisa Martinez, Sergeant Desilva and Lieutenant Harrelson arrived with a special cut down tool. While attempting to utilize the cut down tool, Detention Officer Zubl pulled down on the partially cut sheet, freeing Inmate King from the hanging position. Deputy Hiser placed Inmate King on the floor, flat on his back and immediately began CPR, with the assistance of Lt. Harrelson. Nurse Lisa Martinez requested the AED be brought into the cell. Christus Trinity Mother Francis Ambulance # M14 arrived and took over life saving measures. At approximately 1006 hours, EMS arrived and assisted EMS with life saving measures.

At approximately 1022 hours, Sheriff Hendrix notified the Van Zandt County District Attorney Tonda Curry and updated her on the situation.

Despite all efforts by EMS and Jail Staff, no response could be obtained from Inmate King. He was pronounced deceased at approximately 1024 hours by Judge Plaster.

CID took over Cell # 7 and began an investigation into the incident. At approximately 1050 hours, Sheriff Hendrix contacted Texas Ranger Michael Adcock and informed him of the custodial death within the facility. Ranger Adcock immediately responded to the scene. The scene was merely examined and documented by photographs awaiting the arrival of Ranger Adcock. The scene was secured and maintained until he arrived at approximately 1140 hours.

Lt. Maddox and Sgt. Snell obtained a video of the scene to document it in its entirety.

The only next of kin listed on Inmate King's current and prior book-ins was listed as a "Shelly Chambless" with a phone number of 903-752-1762. When Detective Snell attempted to contact "Shelly", the phone number was listed as no longer working. The records were checked in the jail to determine if there was any other emergency contacts, and none were located.

At approximately 1220 hours, members of the Eubank's Funeral Home arrived at the jail and took possession of Inmate King's body and transported him to the Dallas County Medical Examiner's Office for an autopsy.

Sgt. Snell, Lt. Maddox and Ranger Adcock collected the bed sheet utilized by Inmate King to hang himself and sealed the items in two separate bags. Those bags were sealed and logged into the Van Zandt County Property and Evidence Locker as evidence in the case.

At approximately 1317 hours, Lt. Maddox received a phone call from Brian Pott's with the Dallas County Medical Examiner's Office who advised that he had received the body of Decedent King and was preparing

him for an autopsy. Brian Pott's provided the Dallas County ME Case # of 21-21321.

Meanwhile, Sgt. Snell and Sgt. Wolstencroft continued completing TLO searches for a possible next of kin contact for Decedent King. Then, at approximately 1720 hours, Lt. Maddox received a phone call from Judge Plaster, who stated that she had been in contact with Detective King with Canton Police Department. Detective King had the phone number for Shelly Chambless, he stated he would call her and provide her with death notification. Judge Plaster requested the phone number for Chambless and also stated that she believed that the Sheriff's Office would probably like to do death notification. Detective King declined to provide the phone number to the Judge and further advised that it was his original case and he would take care of it himself.

At approximately 1800 hours, Sgt. Snell and Sgt. Wolstencroft went to the address of 229 VZCR 3829, Wills Point, Van Zandt County, Texas 75126, which is where Decedent King was arrested from in an attempt to locate any possible information on a next of kin. They were unsuccessful in finding anyone.

At approximately 1930 hours, Sgt. Snell was able to locate Sandy and Tommy King of 1753 Ellie Ave, Fayetteville, NC at 910-867-5018 and cell 910-578-8768 as the parents of James Dale King via the TLO application. Sgt. Snell was able to make contact with Sandy and Tommy and provide death notification. Their information was then provided to Judge Plaster for her to be able to complete the death certificate.

On October 18, 2021, Sheriff Hendrix was notified by Judge Plaster that she had received the initial autopsy result from the Dallas County Medical Examiner's Office. The report listed cause of death to be asphyxiation by manner of suicide.

Based on the facts listed above, the Van Zandt County Sheriff's Office Report will be complete with a final determination into the cause of death to be suicide.

The criminal side of the investigation by Texas Ranger M. Adcock will be ongoing.