

BURLINGTON POLICE DEPARTMENT

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PRESS/INFORMATIONAL RELEASE

Date: May 19, 2014 - UPDATE
Incident Number: 14BU12389
Incident Type: Suspicious Death
Contact: Deputy Chief Bruce Bovat - PIO
Authorized by: Chief Michael Schirling
Investigating Officer: Detective My Nguyen

Deceased: Forrest Bryant (40) of Vermont / New York

INITIAL INFORMATION RELEASED 05-17-14

On May 17, 2014 at approximately 7:00 am, the Burlington Fire and Police responded to the wooded area located between 431 and 585 Pine Street for a report of an unresponsive male.

While on scene Fire Personnel determined that the male subject in question was in fact deceased. The male is known to the police department as a local Burlington transient in his 40's. The male was located inside a sleeping structure within a make shift campsite. The male's identity is currently being withheld until proper notification can be made to his family.

The Burlington Police Department is currently treating this incident as a suspicious death. The investigation is only in its infancy, but initial reports indicate that this is an isolated incident and there is no threat to the general public. Anyone with any information is encouraged to contact Detective My Nguyen at (802) 540-2267.

UPDATE 05-19-14

At this time the death remains suspicious. An autopsy has been performed to ascertain the cause and manner of death. Work being performed by the Office of the Chief Medical examiner is intensive and some analysis may not be available for up to three weeks. At this time it is too early to determine the cause and manner of death.

Family has now been contacted and the deceased can be identified as 40-year-old Forrest Bryant. Mr. Bryant has been in the Burlington area for approximately 3 months, having spent time in St. Albans, New York, and southern Vermont in recent years.

All of the people present at the time the deceased passed away have been identified. We are confident that there is no threat to the public at this time.

Investigation continues and all investigative resources are being deployed in this effort. We are following a variety of helpful leads at this stage. Anyone with information about this incident is asked to contact Detective My Nguyen at 802-540-2267.

INFORMATION REGARDING THE ENCAMPMENT LOCATED ON PINE STREET

On May 15, 2014 the City, police, and social services were advised that the encampment on Pine Street had been located by workers in that area. Efforts began the following day to contact people staying in the encampment using the HowardCenter Street Outreach Team. Team members contacted the campers and advised that they would have to remove their belongings by early this week as the encampments would be dismantled at the request of a private property owner and workers in the area.

There is no reason to believe that the contact with campers and the efforts described above play any role in the tragedy of Saturday morning.

At this time, campers are being assisted by Street Outreach Staff, police officers, health workers, and other City Staff in removing belongings and finding temporary housing.

The general operating methodology that occurs when complaints are received about encampments in Burlington is:

1. Encampment is identified/verified.
2. Property owner contacted to ascertain their wishes.
3. BPD sends our Community Support Specialist and Street Outreach Team to engage the campers and give notice that the camp has to come down. They also offer services on a variety of topics and issues. They work with residents to remove their belongings and, hopefully, dismantle and remove the camp.
4. If not fully removed Parks Department or Department of Public Works (depending on location) resources are summoned to help with a truck and personnel to dismantle and remove debris.
5. Property owners are asked to post the property no trespassing and/or remove any items that are causing encampments to be constructed (old shipping containers, parts of kids forts, trees that have fallen and lend themselves to "cabins").

As most residents of the area are aware, encampments are a perennial issue in the Chittenden County area.