

Santa Cruz Sentinel (<http://www.santacruzsentinel.com>)

Rake-wielding man shot and killed by SCPD in Westside Santa Cruz

Police fire on 'unstable' suspect after Taser fails to stop him

By Ryan Masters, Santa Cruz Sentinel

Sunday, October 16, 2016



SANTA CRUZ >> A 32-year-old man described as “mentally unstable” was shot and killed by a Santa Cruz police officer early Sunday near Chace and Gretchell streets on the Westside.

About 3:30 a.m., the resident of a home on the 200 block of Chace Street reported a man “pounding” on his front door. While Santa Cruz police were en route, the man called back and said the man was now at the back door of the residence and yelling that he wanted to kill everyone inside, according to Santa Cruz police spokeswoman Joyce Blaschke.

When officers arrived, they called the man out of the backyard, Blaschke said. The man proceeded to attack the officers with a metal bow rake and refused repeated command from the officers to drop the gardening tool, Blaschke said.

When Tasers proved ineffective in stopping the suspect, lethal force was deployed, Blaschke said.

“One of the officers fired at the suspect with their department-issued handgun. Officers rendered first aid to the suspect until the arrival of emergency medical crews,” Blaschke said.

The man’s identity is not being released at this point.

At midmorning, a wind-whipped blue tent was erected where the man had fallen in the middle of Chace Street. As Santa Cruz County coroners lifted the body onto a gurney and wheeled it through the rain to an unmarked white van, a Chace Street neighbor who asked to remain unidentified said his wife reported hearing three to four gunshots at the time of the incident.

Another neighbor said the residents of the house knew the suspect and had said he was mentally unstable. According to the man, who also asked to remain unidentified, the suspect had broken into the same house a “couple of days” ago. During that incident, the man was Tased and taken into custody, but later released, he said.

An incident matching this description occurred on the 200 block of Chace Street at 9 p.m. Oct. 11. However, Santa Cruz police officials declined to answer any questions Sunday.

The countywide critical incident protocol, which ensures an independent investigation, has been enacted, according to Blaschke. The District Attorney’s Office will serve as the lead investigative agency for the incident.

“The Santa Cruz Police Department will also conduct a separate administrative investigation,” Blaschke said. “Per our policy, the officers involved are placed on administrative leave during the investigation.”

The Santa Cruz Police Department does not use body-worn cameras so video of the incident is unlikely.

Neither the Santa Cruz County Sheriff's Office nor the District Attorney's Office returned calls seeking comment on the incident or its pending investigation into the shooting.

The shooting marks the city's fifth homicide this year.

URL: <http://www.santacruzsentinel.com/general-news/20161016/rake-wielding-man-shot-and-killed-by-scpd-in-westside-santa-cruz>

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