

LCPD: Calls not ignored in puppy death

Sun-News report

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LAS CRUCES - The Las Cruces Police Department has found no evidence to indicate that Animal Control, police officers or anyone at the Mesilla Valley Regional Dispatch Authority ignored calls for service regarding the abuse and eventual death of a 4-month-old puppy this weekend, according to a news release.

In a Sun-News story Thursday, some animal advocates and a witness questioned the length of time it took officers to respond to the incident, which occurred Saturday morning.

In a news release Thursday, LCPD said at no time during the weekend did anyone, including the person who saw the crime being committed, call 911 to report the incident. Police learned that the witness twice called the non-emergency phone number at MVRDA - commonly known as Central Dispatch or the 911 call center - but hung up both times during the automated menu that directs callers to the appropriate agency.

The puppy, a 4-month-old female border collie-mix named Jasmine, was found dead Sunday afternoon inside a trash Dumpster at an apartment complex near 819 Parkview Drive. Richard Nelson McCord, 41, was arrested Sunday and charged with extreme animal cruelty, a fourth-degree felony and the most severe penalty that McCord could be charged with under current state laws.

In the news release, police said the witness to the abuse, who claimed it took too long for her to get through to someone who could check on the dog's welfare, never actually reported the incident to police, animal control or MVRDA.

The witness also reported calling the offices of Animal Control, which are not normally staffed on weekends. Animal Control along with police, fire, ambulance and other emergency services work seven days a week, but rely on accurate information, usually dispatched via MVRDA, to respond appropriately to calls, the news release said.

Police found out that on Saturday, the witness called someone at the Do-a Ana County Humane Society, who subsequently called an off-duty Animal Control officer with partial information about the incident. The information relayed to the officer did not include a physical address of where the abuse took place and did not have any contact information for the witness.

The Animal Control officer asked the representative from the Humane Society to provide more information if and when the witness called again.

Shortly after 12:30 p.m. Sunday, the Animal Control officer received an e-mail from the Humane Society representative, but again with no information on where the incident occurred.

Finally, at 1:56 p.m. Sunday, the off-duty Animal Control officer received an e-mail from the Humane Society representative stating that the incident occurred at 819 "Darkview." The Animal Control officer surmised that the road "Darkview" was actually Parkview. Three minutes later, at 1:59 p.m. Sunday, the off-duty Animal Control officer called an on-duty Animal Control officer who responded to 819 Parkview and learned of the puppy's fate.

"Had someone reported this crime accurately and in a timely manner, by calling 911 or the non-emergency phone number at Central Dispatch and actually conveying the information to a call-taker, our response would have been immediate," said LCPD Chief Richard Williams. "If there's something to be learned from her death, it's that police and emergency services cannot respond to an emergency if we don't know about it.

"The bottom line is if you know of a crime being committed, please call 911 immediately and provide accurate information so that we can respond to the emergency in an appropriate manner."

MVRDA's non-emergency (575) 526-0795 phone number, as the name suggests, is for non-emergencies such as complaints about litter, excessive weeds, barking dogs, etc. Callers to the non-emergency phone number must listen to a recorded menu of options in order to properly direct their call to the correct agency.