



# Sacramento County District Attorney's Office

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June 26, 2015

Lieutenant Kris Palmer  
Sacramento County Sheriff's Department  
711 G Street  
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: In-Custody Death of Veronica Gehrke (DOB 4/12/79)  
SSD Report No. 14-184141

Dear Lt. Palmer:

This case was referred to our office for review of the circumstances surrounding the death of Veronica Gehrke. On August 14, 2014, Gehrke died while in custody and being transported in a patrol vehicle to the main jail for public intoxication. Having completed this review, we find no evidence of criminal misconduct.

On August 14, 2014, at approximately 2:30 p.m., Brian Bassett observed Veronica Gehrke walking down K Street in Rio Linda. Gehrke was sitting down in the middle of the street with her knees in her chest, rocking back and forth, and talking to herself. She also wandered back and forth around Bassett's fence in front of his property. Bassett believed Gehrke was under the influence of alcohol or narcotics so he called 911. Five minutes later, Gehrke fell down on the ground and Bassett called 911 again. This incident was recorded on Bassett's home surveillance video.

At approximately 2:48 p.m., members of the Sacramento Metropolitan Fire District arrived at 400 K Street and observed Gehrke lying supine on the concrete. The crew members recognized Gehrke from prior incidents and called out her name. She immediately arose and walked away unsteadily from the crew members. Gehrke then sat in the grass ditch next to the road, as requested by the crew members. She told the crew members that she had been drinking vodka all day and did not consume drugs. Gehrke denied any pain or discomfort. She then walked to the other side of the street and sat on a driveway under a tree in the shade. Upon examination, her visual vitals appeared normal and her radial pulse was 92 BPM.

At approximately 3:03 p.m., Deputy Margaret Mickelson arrived at the scene and recognized Gehrke from prior contacts at the jail. Gehrke was lying face down on the lawn, mumbling, and rolling on the grass. Deputy Mickelson arrested Gehrke for public intoxication and searched her incident to arrest with negative results. Gehrke was tense, twitching, and walking unsteadily to the patrol car; so fire crew members again checked her pulse rate which was 96 BPM.

Fire personnel cleared Gehrke for transportation to the jail. Gehrke, who was handcuffed behind her back, was placed in the rear of Deputy Mickelson's patrol vehicle. She was seated in an upright position and was secured with the vehicle's seatbelt.

At approximately 3:15 p.m., Deputy Mickelson departed with Gehrke heading to Trinity Church on Madison Avenue and Hillsdale Boulevard to meet Deputy Michael Pietrek, who would transport Gehrke to the jail. A few minutes later, Deputy Mickelson turned on the in car camera to monitor Gehrke's behavior and movements in the back seat of the patrol car. Gehrke continuously twisted, turned, and talked during the trip and, at one point, stated she was "drunk." She then began to lean to her right and eventually laid her upper body down on the seat, while continuing to talk. Gehrke stopped talking and moving at approximately 3:30 p.m., appearing to have nodded off. Deputy Mickelson asked her if she was okay, but Gehrke did not respond.

Deputy Mickelson arrived at Trinity Church at approximately 3:32 p.m. She immediately opened the back door and called out to and shook Gehrke. Gehrke's eyes were open, but she was not responsive. Gehrke appeared to swallow and she had a faint rapid pulse. Deputy Mickelson requested fire medics to the scene, removed Gehrke's handcuffs, placed her upright, and conducted an eyelash flutter test. Gehrke did not respond and did not have a pulse or respirations. Deputies Mickelson and Pietrek removed Gehrke from the patrol car and placed her on the ground to perform cardiopulmonary resuscitation. At 3:41 p.m., fire crew members arrived at the scene, treated Gehrke, and transported her to Mercy San Juan Hospital. Gehrke was pronounced deceased at 4:07 p.m. by Dr. Jacqueline Johnsen. Dr. Johnsen did not observe any signs of obvious trauma to Gehrke, other than a slightly elevated body temperature.

Forensic Pathologist Dr. Brian Nagao conducted an autopsy and determined that Gehrke had a sudden death while under arrest in association with combined toxic effects of methamphetamine and ethanol. Toxicology testing revealed the presence of methamphetamine and ethanol in Gehrke's blood.

We conclude that Gehrke died from taking a lethal combination of methamphetamine and alcohol. No evidence of criminal misconduct by law enforcement was presented or suggested by the facts reported. Thus, the District Attorney's Office will take no further action in this matter.

cc: SSD Detective Ken Clark #534  
SSD Deputy Margaret Mickelson #724