

JAN 20 2/4/2020

# Coroner Report Santa Barbara County Sheriff

19-11430

Supplement No  
ORIG



4434 Calle Real

Reported Date  
09/02/2019

Santa Barbara, CA 93110-1002  
Report Type  
CORONER

Officer  
BIEDINGER, C

(805) 681-4100

Administrative Information						
Agency	Report No	Supplement No	Reported Date	Reported Time	Status	
Santa Barbara County Sheriff	19-11430	ORIG	09/02/2019	03:32	Incident	
Report Type	Location					
Coroner's investigation	PLATTS HARBOR SANTA CRUZ ISLAND					
City	Rep Dist	Area	Beat	From Date	From Time	
Santa Barbara City	101	1	10	09/02/2019	03:32	
Officer	Assignment		Entered by	Assignment		
3144/BIEDINGER, C	CORONER BUREAU		3144	CORONER BUREAU		
RMS Transfer	Report Title	Approving Officer	Approval Date			
Pending	Coroner Report	3768	01/30/2020			
Approval Time						
12:38:22						
Cause of death (COR only)		Due to (COR only)		Manner of death (COR only)		Date/Time of death pronounced
SMOKE INHALATION		BOAT FIRE		Accident		09-02-19/
Determined by (COR only)		Dr. will sign	Hospitalization	Mortuary		
Investigation		N	N	Simply Remembered Cremati		
Removal Status	Date/Time NOK notified	NOK notified by:		NOK notified via		
Family request	09-05-19/ 0932 hours	Detective Holman		In person		
NOK relation to decedent						
Person Summary						
Invl	Invl No	Type	Name	MNI	Race	Sex
COR	1	I	MCLAUGHLIN, CAROLINE ANNETTE	987648	W	F
DOB						
Summary Narrative						
On 09-02-19, at approximately 0443 hours, 35-year-old, Caroline McLaughlin died from smoke inhalation when the vessel she was on, for a diving expedition, caught fire.						

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**Decedent - Coroner Investigation 1: MCLAUGHLIN, CAROLINE ANNETTE**

Involvement <b>Decedent - Coroner Investigation</b>		Invt No <b>1</b>	Type <b>Individual</b>				
Name <b>MCLAUGHLIN, CAROLINE ANNETTE</b>		MNI <b>987648</b>	Race <b>White</b>	Sex <b>Female</b>	DOB [REDACTED]	Age <b>35</b>	Juvenile? <b>No</b>
Height <b>5'03"</b>	Weight <b>140#</b>	Hair Color <b>Brown</b>	Eye Color <b>Brown</b>				
Type <b>Home</b>	Address [REDACTED]		City [REDACTED]	State [REDACTED]			
ZIP Code [REDACTED]	Date [REDACTED]						
Type <b>Operator License</b>	ID No [REDACTED]	OLS [REDACTED]					
Type <b>Social Security Number</b>	ID No [REDACTED]						
Relationship <b>Next of kin</b>	Name [REDACTED]	Race [REDACTED]	Sex [REDACTED]	DOB [REDACTED]			
Address [REDACTED]		City [REDACTED]	State [REDACTED]				
ZIP Code [REDACTED]	Phone Type <b>Cell</b>	Phone No [REDACTED]					
Relationship <b>Next of kin</b>	Name [REDACTED]	Race [REDACTED]	Sex [REDACTED]				

**Medical**

Citizenship <b>US CITIZEN</b>	Place of Birth <b>California</b>	Occupation <b>SOFTWARE E</b>	NOK Notified? <b>Yes</b>
NOK Name [REDACTED]	Mortuary Name <b>SIMPLY REMEMBERED CR</b>	Family Request? <b>Yes</b>	
Injury Place <b>BOAT</b>	Injury Date <b>09/02/2019</b>	Injured At Work? <b>No</b>	
Injury Premise <b>PLATT'S HARBOR SANTA CRUZ ISLAND SANTA BARBARA, CA 95060 (34.02858 N 119.44172 W)</b>			
How Injured <b>DECEDENT DIED FROM SMOKE INHALATION DURING A BOAT FIRE.</b>			

**Narrative**

**Continuations :**

Caroline Mclaughlin is the decedent.  
[REDACTED]

**Narrative :**

On 09-02-19, at approximately 0516 hours, the Santa Barbara Sheriff's Office was notified by the Ventura Fire Department of a vessel on fire in the Channel Islands off the coast of Santa Barbara County. The Coast Guard responded along with Ventura Fire Department and Santa Barbara County Fire Department. Upon arrival at the scene the vessel was found to be fully engulfed in fire. The call had originally come into the Coast Guard at 0332 hours, on 09-02-19.

Reports to the Coast Guard said there were possibly be 34 subjects "trapped below" the water line, in the vessel. The vessel was identified as the Conception and it was in jurisdiction of the Santa Barbara Sheriff's Office near Santa Cruz Island, not in Ventura Sheriff's Department jurisdiction. The location was later found to be 300 yards off shore of Platts Harbor on Santa Cruz Island. See Santa Barbara County Sheriff's Department case number 19-11415 for full details.

Sgt. Morris was notified of the incident by Sergeant Valencia. Sergeant Morris requested the response of Detective Henslin, Detective Carlson and myself to the Coroner's Bureau to assist in the incident at approximately 0525 hours.

Detective Baisa was also called at that time and asked to respond to Ventura Harbor to act as the liaison for the Sheriff's Office.

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**Narrative**

It was later found the vessel, the "Conception" contained 34 passengers and five crew members. Five of the crew members were rescued, but none of the 34 passengers had been found.

During the course of the morning four deceased passengers had been located by Coast Guard personnel. The Coast Guard transported the decedents to the Santa Barbara Harbor.

At 1150 hours, on 09-02-19, Sgt. Morris, Detective Henslin and I responded to the Santa Barbara Harbor to retrieve decedents documented as 1 through 4.

At 1220 hours, on 09-02-19, the decedents were brought to Santa Barbara Harbor. Detective Henslin and I transported two decedent's each to the Santa Barbara Coroner's Bureau, where physical examinations were later conducted on them.

At that time digital photographs were taken of the decedents along with samples collected for DNA analysis identification and for an expanded toxicology panel. All of the decedents retrieved on 09-02-19, were found to have significant thermal burns to their bodies with limbs missing due to the intensity of the fire. None of the decedents could be identified by physical characteristics.

At 2030 hours, on 09-02-19, Sgt Morris, Det. Henslin, Det. Carlson, Det. Baisa, Deputy Bruening and I, along with staff from the Los Angeles County Coroner's Office responded to the Santa Barbara Harbor for retrieval of 16 additional bodies recovered from the Conception, documented as decedents 5 through 20.

The decedents were then transported to Coroner's Bureau for examinations, drawing of fluids for toxicology and DNA analysis, and collection of personal property.

At approximately 2330 hours, on 09-02-19, all the examinations of the decedents were completed and the decedents were placed in a portable morgue provided by the Los Angeles County Coroner's Office.

On 09-03-19, at 0730 hours, Sgt Morris, Det. Henslin, Det. Carlson, Det. Baisa, Deputy Bruening, myself, and staff from the Los Angeles County Coroner's Office responded to the Santa Barbara Harbor for retrieval of 13 more remains recovered from the Conception, documented as decedents 21 through 33.

The decedents were then all transported to the Santa Barbara Coroner's Bureau, where physical examinations, digital photographs, and fluid samples for DNA analysis and toxicology where conducted on each recovered decedent.

All of the decedents recovered on 09-03-19 were placed on portable coroner racks and secured in the Santa Barbara Coroner's Bureau morgue.

**Physical evidence:**

A series of digital photographs were taken of the decedent at the Coroner's Bureau by Forensic Personnel from the Santa Barbara Sheriff's Department. The photo card was later downloaded for storage at the Coroner's Bureau.

**Identification of decedent:**

The decedent was positively identified by a DNA comparison, with samples submitted by the decedent's parents, [REDACTED]. The DNA comparison was conducted via the Sacramento County Coroner's Office.

Also, additional identification for the decedent was confirmed via a latent print search performed by the Federal Bureau of Investigations, conducted on 09-06-19.

**Examination of decedent:**

On 09-02-19-19, at approximately 2252 hours, an examination of the decedent was conducted at the Coroner's Bureau after the decedent was transported from Santa Barbara Harbor. A tag with her assigned case number was attached to the body bag.

The decedent was received lying on her right side, in a fetal position. She was clothed in a shirt and pajama pants with character of Mario, from Mario brothers, printed on them. The clothing she was wearing had fire

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**Narrative**

damage to it. One pink in color, left foot, "flip flop" was laying next to her left foot. A tag with a case number assigned to her investigation was affixed to the body bag.

The decedent was a well-developed, overweight, female.

Her hair was burnt off, with her scalp and skull visible. The decedent's face had thermal injuries as well, with her facial features not visibly identifiable.

Thermal burns were present from her neck down to her shoulders, upper chest, and down to her lower back, ending above her buttocks. Slight burn marks were on his lower chest/upper abdomen, with the skin on her lower abdomen pink in color.

Blistering to her skin and singed marks were on both of her upper thighs down to her ankles. Her feet were both charred black in color from thermal burns, especially the bottoms of her feet. The decedent's legs were both pulled up in a fetal position.

Her arms were pulled across her chest with her left hand resting under her right hand. Singing to her skin, blistering, and thermal burns were on both of her arms from her shoulders to her hands. Both of her hands were black in color from exposure to fire.

Post mortem lividity could not be detected due to her injuries and rigor mortis was present in all of her extremities. She did not have any visible or detectable tattoos.

Samples of bodily fluids were obtained from the decedent to include two tubes of femoral blood.

One tube of femoral blood was submitted to Alere Forensics for toxicology analysis. The remaining fluid sample was refrigerated at the Coroner's Bureau pending a need for toxicology analysis.

**Post mortem examination :**

Due to the severity of the decedent's thermal injuries and obvious traumatic injuries, along with the circumstances regarding the incident, regarding the vessel she was on becoming ignited, a post mortem examination was deferred.

**Statements :**

On 09-05-19, at approximately 0932 hours, Detective Holman contacted both of the decedent's parents, [REDACTED] via telephone, telling them positive identification of the decedent had occurred.

On 09-06-19, approximately 1730 hours, I called and spoke with [REDACTED] informing him positive identification had been made. I also told him the decedent could be released to a mortuary or crematorium of his choice.

[REDACTED] responded he understood and he would be contacting a mortuary for the decedent.

**Consultation with primary care physician :**

The decedent's primary care physician was unknown and no contact was made with any physician regarding medical history for the decedent.

**Forensic toxicology :**

On 09-12-19, a toxicology report was received from Alere Forensics regarding the decedent's carbon monoxide saturation. The report indicated the following:

Carbon monoxide                      64 % saturation

On 09-18-19, a toxicology report was received from Alere Forensics regarding the decedent's cyanide saturation. The report indicated the following:

Cyanide                                      None detected

On 09-28-19, a toxicology report was received from Alere Forensics regarding the decedent. The report indicated the following:

Report Officer  
144/BIEDINGER, C

*[Handwritten signature]*

Printed At  
01/30/2020 13:03

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**Narrative**

Meclizine 17 ng/ml

Copies of these reports was reviewed with Dr. Manny Montez and found to be contributive to the decedent's death.

**Consultations with Forensic Pathologist:**

I reviewed the circumstance surrounding this death with Dr. Manny Montez. Dr. Montez opined that the decedent died as a result of smoke inhalation due to a boat fire based on the circumstances of the decedent's death, along with toxicology results.

**In review of the circumstances of this death:**

On 09-02-19, at approximately 0443 hours, 35-year-old, Caroline McLaughlin died from smoke inhalation when the vessel she was on, for a diving expedition, caught fire.

**Cause of Death:**

It was determined that the decedent (MCLAUGHLIN) died as a result of the following cause;

**SMOKE INHALATION (Minutes)**

Due to:

**BOAT FIRE (Minutes)**

**Manner of death:**

The manner of death will be certified by the Office of the Coroner as **ACCIDENTAL**.

**Final Disposition:**

The decedent was released to representatives of Simply Remembered Cremation Care in Santa Barbara, Ca. No property or medication was collected.

**Case closed**

# Santa Barbara County Sheriff



4434 Calle Real  
Santa Barbara, CA 93110-1002  
Report Type  
**FORENSICS**

(805) 681-4100

**19-11430**

Supplement No  
0001

Reported Date  
09/24/2019

Officer  
SANDOVAL, M

Administrative Information												
Agency	Santa Barbara County Sheriff		Report No	19-11430	Supplement No	0001	Reported Date	09/24/2019	Reported Time	09:44	Status	Incident
Report Type	Forensics BOC		Location	66 S SAN ANTONIO RD								
City	ZIP Code	Rep Dist	Area	Beat	From Date	From Time						
Santa Barbara City	93110	137	1	40	09/02/2019	03:32						
Officer	3703/SANDOVAL, M		Assignment	FORENSICS	Entered by	3703	Assignment	FORENSICS	RMS Transfer	Pending		
Approving Officer	2901	Approval Date	09/24/2019	Approval Time	11:52:53							

## Summary Narrative

Photo-documentation of Decedent #12.

## Narrative

### E-FILE ATTACHMENTS:

None

### NARRATIVE:

At 1715 hours on Monday, 09/02/19, I received a call from Forensic Supervisor Nancy Fabela advising my assistance would be needed to photograph the recovered bodies from the 'Conception' boat fire. This incident occurred in Santa Cruz Island earlier that morning. Supervisor Fabela advised the bodies would arrive at the Coroner's Office between 2130 and 2200 hours.

At 1905 hours on Monday, 09/02/19, I received a call from Forensic Supervisor Fabela advising I respond to the Coroner's Office at 2100 hours along with CSI Technician Amezola.

CSI Technician Amezola and I arrived at the Santa Maria station, gathered our equipment and left the station in the Forensic Crime scene van at 2000 hours.

### WALK THROUGH:

CSI Technician Amezola and I arrived at the Santa Barbara Coroner's Office at 2100 hours and met with Forensic Supervisor Fabela and Sergeant Mike McCoy. Sergeant McCoy advised the recovered bodies were enroute to the Coroner's Office. The Los Angeles Coroner's Bureau was present as well.

At 2140 hours, our SBSO Coroner's Bureau arrived with the recovered bodies.

### PHOTO-DOCUMENTATION :

At 2252 hours, on Monday 09/02/19, I took overall photographs of Decedent #12. The body was in a body bag with a Santa Barbara County Sheriff's Coroner tag #12 hanging from the zipper. The decedent was badly burned wearing a dark colored t-shirt, Super Mario pajama bottoms, and flip flop sandals. She was wearing red colored thread looking bracelet on her left wrist. The decedent had a purple colored piece of clothing in her possession. I then photographed her unclothed.

Photo-documentation was completed at 2306 hours on 09/02/19. All of the photographs were later uploaded to the Santa Barbara Forensic Units's digital evidence hard drive under 19-11430 for future reference.

### FINAL WALK-THROUGH:

Forensic Supervisor Fabela, CSI Technician Amezola and I gathered our equipment and left the Coroner's Office at 0020 hours, on Tuesday 09/03/19.

Report Officer	3703/SANDOVAL, M	Printed At	01/30/2020 13:03	Page 1 of 2
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**Narrative**

We arrived at the Santa Barbara station at 0025 hours, downloaded all photos, and left at 0106 hours.

~ END OF REPORT ~



ALERE FORENSICS AT REDWOOD TOXICOLOGY LABORATORY

3650 Westwind Blvd, Santa Rosa, CA 95403  
Phone 866-584-0887 FAX 707-703-1319

Agency # 19-11430

FORENSIC LABORATORY REPORT

AF # 2019-003227

To: Brice Bruening  
Santa Barbara County Sheriff-Coroner

Sample Collection Date: September 2, 2019

Decedent: Caroline McLaughlin

The following evidence was submitted to the Laboratory by a representative of the Santa Barbara County Sheriff-Coroner on 9/5/2019 via FedEx:

Submission 01: One tape sealed and initialed screw top metal canister containing a second screw top metal canister containing one tube of peripheral blood with paperwork marked in part "#12 Doe Jane". The name "McLaughlin, Caroline" was supplied on 9-9-19.

Item # 01-A: One gray top tube with approximately 9 mL of peripheral blood collected at 2330 hours.

Service Request:

FP760B - Carboxyhemoglobin/Carbon Monoxide - Blood

**Confirmation/Screen Results**

Analyte Name	Concentration	Method	Sample Type
Carbon Monoxide	64 %	AVOXimeter 4000	Blood



2019-003227-0002

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Laureen J. Marinetti".

Laureen J. Marinetti, Ph.D., F-ABFT  
Laboratory Director

Date of Report: September 12, 2019

*Alere Forensics at Redwood Toxicology is accredited by The American Board of Forensic Toxicology (ABFT) and is recognized by the State of California as a Title 17 Forensic Alcohol Laboratory.*

All samples, including the sample packaging, will be retained at the laboratory for one year after the date of report. After one year, the samples and packaging will be destroyed unless the client requests that the samples be returned or an alternate retention policy has been set up with the laboratory. The laboratory cannot ship controlled substances.

**Comments**

None



ALERE FORENSICS AT REDWOOD TOXICOLOGY LABORATORY

3650 Westwind Blvd. Santa Rosa, CA 95403  
Phone 866-584-0887 FAX 707-703-1319

Agency # 19-11430

FORENSIC LABORATORY REPORT

AF # 2019-003227

To: Brice Bruening  
Santa Barbara County Sheriff-Coroner

Sample Collection Date: September 2, 2019

Decedent: Caroline McLaughlin

The following evidence was submitted to the Laboratory by a representative of the Santa Barbara County Sheriff-Coroner on 9/5/2019 via FedEx:

Submission 01: One tape sealed and initialed screw top metal canister containing a second screw top metal canister containing one tube of peripheral blood with paperwork marked in part "#12 Doe Jane". The name "McLaughlin, Caroline" was supplied on 9-9-19.

Item # 01-A: One gray top tube with approximately 9 mL of peripheral blood collected at 2330 hours.

Service Request:

FP222B - Expanded Pnl (Confirm) - Blood



Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Lauren J. Marinetti".

Laureen J. Marinetti, Ph.D., F-ABFT  
Laboratory Director

Date of Report: September 28, 2019

*Alere Forensics at Redwood Toxicology is accredited by The American Board of Forensic Toxicology (ABFT) and is recognized by the State of California as a Title 17 Forensic Alcohol Laboratory.*

All samples, including the sample packaging, will be retained at the laboratory for one year after the date of report. After one year, the samples and packaging will be destroyed unless the client requests that the samples be returned or an alternate retention policy has been set up with the laboratory. The laboratory cannot ship controlled substances.

**Comments**

EtOH - ethanol, IPA - isopropanol, MeOH - methanol



ALERE FORENSICS AT REDWOOD TOXICOLOGY LABORATORY

3650 Westwind Blvd. Santa Rosa, CA 95403  
Phone 866-584-0887 FAX 707-703-1319

Agency # 19-11430

FORENSIC LABORATORY REPORT

AF # 2019-003227

To: Brice Bruening  
Santa Barbara County Sheriff-Coroner

Sample Collection Date: September 2, 2019

Decedent: Caroline McLaughlin

The following evidence was submitted to the Laboratory by a representative of the Santa Barbara County Sheriff-Coroner on 9/5/2019 via FedEx:

Submission 01: One tape sealed and initialed screw top metal canister containing a second screw top metal canister containing one tube of peripheral blood with paperwork marked in part "#12 Doe Jane". The name "McLaughlin, Caroline" was supplied on 9-9-19.

Item # 01-A: One gray top tube with approximately 9 mL of peripheral blood collected at 2330 hours.

Service Request:

F1048B - Misc. Chemicals (Qualitative) - Blood

Confirmation/Screen Results

Analyte Name	Concentration	Method	Sample Type
Cyanide	Not Detected	Color Screen	Blood



Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Lauren J. Marinetti".

Laureen J. Marinetti, Ph.D., F-ABFT  
Laboratory Director

Date of Report: September 13, 2019

*Alere Forensics at Redwood Toxicology is accredited by The American Board of Forensic Toxicology (ABFT) and is recognized by the State of California as a Title 17 Forensic Alcohol Laboratory.*

All samples, including the sample packaging, will be retained at the laboratory for one year after the date of report. After one year, the samples and packaging will be destroyed unless the client requests that the samples be returned or an alternate retention policy has been set up with the laboratory. The laboratory cannot ship controlled substances.

**Comments**

The limit of detection for the cyanide color screen is 0.5 mcg/mL.