

7-11-20 3-2-20

# CORONER REPORT Santa Barbara County Sheriff

19-11435

Supplement No  
ORIG



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

Reported Date  
09/02/2019

Officer  
HENSLIN, T

(805) 681-4100

Administrative Information									
Agency Santa Barbara County Sheriff		Report No 19-11435		Supplement No ORIG		Reported Date 09/02/2019		Reported Time 03:30	Status Incident
Report Type Coroner's investigation			Location PLATTS HARBOR SANTA CRUZ ISLAND						
City Santa Barbara City		ZIP Code 95060	Rep Dist 101	Area 1	Beat 10	From Date 09/02/2019		From Time 03:30	
Officer 2718/HENSLIN, T				Assignment CORONER BUREAU		Entered by 2718		Assignment CORONER BUREAU	
RMS Transfer Pending	Report Title CORONER REPORT		Approving Officer 3768			Approval Date 02/21/2020			
Approval Time 14:30:25									
Cause of death (COR only) SMOKE INHALATION		Due to (COR only) BOAT FIRE		Manner of death (COR only) ACCIDENT		Date/Time of death pronounced 09-02-19/0443 HRS			
Date/Time body found 09-02-19/0443 HRS		Determined by (COR only) INVESTIGATION		Dr. will sign N		Hospitalization N			
Mortuary CORONER'S BUREAU		Removal Status CALL OUT		Date/Time NOK notified 09-11-19/1100 HRS		NOK notified by: DET HENSLIN			
NOK notified via TELEPHONE		NOK relation to decedent							
Person Summary									
Invl	Invl No	Type	Name	MNI	Race	Sex	DOB		
COR	1	I	AHOPELTO, JUHA PEKKA	989098	W	M			
Summary Narrative									
The decedent died as a result of a boat fire located at Platts Harbor, Santa Cruz Island, Santa Barbara Ca. The fire is being investigated by the United States Coast Guard, FBI and ATF. The death investigation is being conducted by the Santa Barbara Coroner's Bureau. The manner of death is being certified as an ACCIDENT.									

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Decedent - Coroner Investigation 1: AHOPELTO, JUHA PEKKA									
Involvement			Invl No	Type					
Decedent - Coroner Investigation			1	Individual					
Name			MNI	Race	Sex	DOB	Age	Juvenile?	
AHOPELTO, JUHA PEKKA			989098	White	Male		50	No	
Height	Weight	Hair Color	Eye Color						
6' 00"	190#	Brown	Blue						
Type	Address				City	State			
Home									
ZIP Code	Date								
Type	ID No		OLS						
Operator License									
Type	ID No		Social Security Number						
Social Security Number									
Relationship	Name			Race	Sex				
Address				City	State				
ZIP Code	Phone Type	Phone No							
	Cell								
Medical									
Citizenship			Place of Birth				Occupation		
USA/FINLAND			Foreign country not listed				ENGINEER		
Coroner Case No	NOK Notified?	Premise Sealed?	Property?	Vehicle?	Legal Document	Other Documents?	Other Agency		
19-11435	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	USCG		
OA Officer	OA Case No		NOK Name						
Mortuary Name	On Call?	Family Request?	Other?						
MCDERMOTT-CROCKETT	No	Yes	No						
Nature of Illness									
N/A									
Injury Place				Injury Date	Injury Time	Injured At Work?			
BOAT				09/02/2019	03:30:00	No			
Injury Premise									
PLATTS HARBOR SANTA CRUZ ISLAND SANTA BARBARA CA									
How Injured									
BOAT FIRE									
Decedent Driver	Decedent Passenger	Decedent Pedestrian							
No	No	No							

**Narrative**

**Continuations:**

Juha-Pekka Ahopelto is the decedent.

**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 shore of Platts Harbor on Santa Cruz Island. See Santa Barbara County Sheriff's Department case number 11415 for full details.

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

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**Narrative**

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.

It was later found the vessel, the "Conception" contained 33 passengers and six crew members. Five of the crew members were rescued, but none of the 33 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 Detective Biedinger 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 Detective Biedinger 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. Biedinger, Det. Henslin, Det. Carlson, Det. Baisa, Deputy Bruening and 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 1930 hours, Sgt Morris, Det. Biedinger, Det. Henslin, Det. Carlson, Det. Baisa, Deputy Bruening 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 were 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.

On 09-09-19, at approximately 1400 hours, Pathologist Dr. Manny Montez, Detective Henslin, Detective Baisa, and Sgt. Morris, along with representatives from the FBI and ATF performed tracheal examinations of the remaining decedents at the Coroner's Bureau.

On 09-10-19, at approximately 1830 hours, Detective Baisa met with Santa Barbara Sheriff's Department Sgt. Nelson, the National Park Service, 1901 Spinnaker Drive in Ventura, Ca. Sgt. Nelson provided Detective Baisa with a bag of suspected human flesh, a backpack and an air vent from the Conception that had suspected human hair embedded in it. The suspected human tissue and other items were found in the bow of the Conception.

Items later numbered 35 and 36 were transported to the Santa Barbara Coroner's Bureau where digital photographs were taken of the suspected human tissue and suspected human hair, which was removed from the suspect air vent.

The suspected human tissue and hair were later flown to the Sacramento County Coroner's Office in Sacramento, Ca., under the care of Sgt. Morris and Deputy Bruening for DNA analysis.

At approximately 1330 hours, on 09-11-19, Detective Henslin and Detective Biedinger responded to Santa Barbara Harbor, after Divers from the Los Angeles Police Department located the remains of a decedent, near the

Officer  
18/HENSLIN, T

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**Narrative**

location of the Conception fire. The Los Angeles Police Department collected the remains, with a section of hair, documented as numbers 37 and 38.

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

The sample of collected hair was packaged and sent along the DNA samples of decedent number 37 for DNA analysis in Sacramento California, under the care of Detective Henslin, who flew to the Sacramento Airport and provided the samples to Sgt. Morris who was still in Sacramento.

The samples were then taken to the Sacramento County Coroner's Office, for DNA analysis.

**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 [REDACTED] the decedent's son. The DNA comparison was conducted via the Sacramento County Coroner's Office.

**Examination of decedent:**

The decedent was received at the Coroner's Bureau inside two black body bags. The decedent was lying on his back and appeared to be dark colored shorts and tennis shoes that were gray and black. All exposed bones on the decedent were discolored and charred, indicating exposure to intense fire for different periods of time.

**Head:**

Severe thermal burns and fractures were visible upon the face and head. The top of the head had severe thermal burns about the entire skull. The underlying fatty tissue of the decedent's head and bone structure was exposed as well as the decedent's teeth which were extremely charred and discolored. No indications of foul play were noted to the decedent's face or skull. Both eyes were severely damaged from fire. Due to the severity of the thermal burns, the decedent's facial features could not be determined therefore DNA was used to identify him.

**Upper Torso:**

The entire upper torso (Chest, abdomen) sustained severe thermal burns. Exposed underlying muscle, and skeletal frame was visible. Some internal organs were partially exposed in the abdomen area.

**Arms:**

The left arm was noted to be bent at the elbow towards the chest in a pugilistic position. The left arm sustained severe thermal burns which caused the decedent's right hand to fracture and partially detach, bending to the rear of the forearm. The underlying muscle tissue and fibers were visible as well as the underlying fatty tissue. The right arm was missing from the mid-humerus to the hand due to the fire intensity. The right hand was missing.

**Legs:**

Both legs were bent in a pugilistic position, bent at the waist and knee areas. Thermal burns were visible upon both legs from the upper area to the feet. The left leg had different stages of thermal burns starting from the upper section to the foot. The burns ranged from second to the most severe thermal burns. Multiple skin splits exposing the underlying fatty tissue and muscle were noted to the mid-thigh down. The right leg sustained the same amount of thermal burns as the left leg, also exposing underlying fatty tissue

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**Narrative**

and muscle.

-Multiple skin splits and charring was visible.

**Back:**

-Black color charring and redness was visible on the entire back of the decedent.

-No skin splits were noted.

**Post mortem examination:**

Due to the severity of the decedent's thermal injuries, along with the circumstances regarding the incident, regarding the vessel he was on becoming ignited, a post mortem examination was deferred. During the course of this examination, Dr. Montez conducted a tracheal exam to determine the presence of soot in the decedent's airway. During the examination of *Juha-Pekka Ahopelto*, soot was present in his airway.

**Statements:**

I made telephone contact with the decedent's wife regarding the incident and the Coroner's Role in the investigation into the cause and manner of death for the decedent. I provided her with contact information regarding the fire investigation part of the incident. The decedent's wife eventually made funeral arrangements with McDermott-Crockett Mortuary.

Once the decedent's death certificate was completed, I again contacted the decedent's wife to explain the death certificate and answer any questions she had.

**Forensic toxicology:**

On 09/02/19, toxicology samples were obtained from the decedent to include one vial of femoral blood and one vial of subclavian. One vial of subclavian blood was submitted to Alere Forensics for testing. The remaining vial was retained at the Coroner's Bureau pending the need for further testing.

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 >75 % saturation**

On 09/13/19, a toxicology report was received from Alere Forensics regarding the decedent's cyanide saturation. The report indicated the following:

<1 mcg/ml

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

Positive findings:

**None Detected**

Copies of these reports was reviewed with Dr. Manny Montez and found the Carbon Monoxide to be contributive to the decedent's death. The other toxicology results were non-contributory to the decedent's death.

**Consultations with Forensic Pathologist:**

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 BOAT FIRE.

**Review of the circumstances of this death:**

On 09-02-19, at approximately 0443 hours, 50-year-old, *Juha-Pekka Ahopelto* 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 (*Juha-Pekka Ahopelto*) died as a result of the following cause;

**SMOKE INHALATION (Mins)**

Due to:

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**BOAT FIRE (Mins)**

With other significant conditions:  
**None**

**Manner of death:**

The manner of death will be certified by the Office of the Coroner as:

**ACCIDENT**

**Final Disposition:**

The decedent was released to representatives of McDermott-Crockett Mortuary. Any property that was found to be related the decedent was turned over to the FBI Victim Specialist Unit.

**Case closed.**



ALERE FORENSICS AT REDWOOD TOXICOLOGY LABORATORY

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

Agency # 19-11435

FORENSIC LABORATORY REPORT

AF # 2019-003235

To: Brice Bruening  
Santa Barbara County Sheriff-Coroner

Sample Collection Date: September 2, 2019

Decedent: Juha Ahopelto

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 blood with paperwork marked in part "#17 Doe John". The name "Ahopelto, Juha" was supplied on 9-12-19.

Item # 01-A: One gray top tube with approximately 6 mL of peripheral blood collected at 2330 hours.

Service Request:

FP222B - Expanded Pnl (Confirm) - Blood



2019-003235-0002

**Drug Screen Results - ELISA**

<u>Drug Screen Classification</u>	<u>Result</u>	<u>Limit of Detection</u>
Amphetamine	Not Detected	20.0 ng/mL
Barbiturates	Not Detected	1.0 mcg/mL
Benzodiazepines	Not Detected	25.0 ng/mL
Buprenorphine	Not Detected	1.0 ng/mL
Carisoprodol	Not Detected	500.0 ng/mL
Cocaine Metabolite	Not Detected	50.0 ng/mL
Fentanyl	Not Detected	1.0 ng/mL
Marijuana Metabolite	Not Detected	10.0 ng/mL
Methadone	Not Detected	25.0 ng/mL
Methamphetamine	Not Detected	20.0 ng/mL
Opiates	Not Detected	10.0 ng/mL
Oxycodone \ Oxymorphone	Not Detected	5.0 ng/mL
PCP	Not Detected	5.0 ng/mL
Tramadol	Not Detected	50.0 ng/mL
Zolpidem	Not Detected	5.0 ng/mL

**Confirmation/Screen Results**

<u>Analyte Name</u>	<u>Concentration</u>	<u>Method</u>	<u>Sample Type</u>
Basic Drug Screen	None Detected	LC-MS-MS	Blood
Volatiles (EtOH, IPA, MeOH, Acetone)	Not Detected	GC-Headspace	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

*Alera 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



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Phone 866-584-0887 FAX 707-703-1319

Agency # 19-11435

FORENSIC LABORATORY REPORT

AF # 2019-003235

To: Brice Bruening  
Santa Barbara County Sheriff-Coroner

Sample Collection Date: September 2, 2019

Decedent: Juha Ahopelto

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 blood with paperwork marked in part "#17 Doe John". The name "Ahopelto, Juha" was supplied on 9-12-19.

Item # 01-A: One gray top tube with approximately 6 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	< 1 mcg/mL	Color Screen	Blood



2019-003235-0003

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Lauren J. Marinetti". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a small flourish at the end.

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

Date of Report: September 13, 2019

*Alera 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.*

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**Comments**

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



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Phone 866-584-0887 FAX 707-703-1319

Agency # 19-11435

FORENSIC LABORATORY REPORT

AF # 2019-003235

To: Brice Bruening  
Santa Barbara County Sheriff-Coroner

Sample Collection Date: September 2, 2019

Decedent: Juha Ahopelto

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 blood with paperwork marked in part "#17 Doe John". The name "Ahopelto, Juha" was supplied on 9-12-19.

Item # 01-A: One gray top tube with approximately 6 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	> 75 %	AVOXimeter 400D	Blood



2019-003235-0001

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 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.*

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**Comments**

None