

Coroner Report
Santa Barbara County Sheriff

19-11950

Supplement No
 ORIG



4434 Calle Real

Santa Barbara, CA 93110-1002
 Report Type
 CORONER

Reported Date
 09/02/2019

Officer
 BIEDINGER, C

(805) 681-4100

| Administrative Information | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---------|------------------|---------------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------|---------------|-------------------------------|----------------|-----|
| Agency | | Report No | | Supplement No | | Reported Date | | Status | |
| Santa Barbara County Sheriff | | 19-11950 | | ORIG | | 09/02/2019 | | 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 | | | | | | | | | |
| 12:41:54 | | | | | | | | | |
| 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/ 0443 | | |
| Date/Time body found | | | Determined by (COR only) | | Dr. will sign | | Hospitalization | | |
| 09-011-19/ unknown hours | | | Investigation | | N | | N | | |
| Mortuary | | | Removal Status | | Date/Time NOK notified | | | | |
| Benito and Azzaro Pacific | | | Family request | | 09-11-19/ 2100 hours | | | | |
| NOK notified by: | | NOK notified via | | NOK relation to decedent | | | | | |
| Sheriff Brown | | Telephone | | Stepfather | | | | | |
| Person Summary | | | | | | | | | |
| Invl | Invl No | Type | Name | | | MNI | Race | Sex | DOB |
| COR | 1 | I | FELIPE, BERENICE | | | 1001860 | H | F | |
| Summary Narrative | | | | | | | | | |
| On 09-02-19, at approximately 0443 hours, 16-year-old, Berenice Felipe died from smoke inhalation when the vessel she was on, for a diving expedition, caught fire. | | | | | | | | | |

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| Decedent - Coroner Investigation 1: FELIPE, BERENICE | | | | | | | | | |
|--|--------------------|-------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|------------------------------------|--|--|
| Involvement Decedent - Coroner Investigation | | | | Invl No 1 | Type Individual | | | | |
| Name FELIPE, BERENICE | | | MNI 1001860 | Race Hispanic/Mexican/Latin | | | Sex Female | | |
| DOB | Age 16 | Juvenile? Yes | Height 5'01" | Weight 128# | Hair Color Black | Eye Color Brown | | | |
| Type Home | Address | | | | City | State | | | |
| ZIP Code | Date | | | | | | | | |
| Type State ID Card | ID No | OLS California | | | | | | | |
| Type Social Security Number | ID No | | | | | | | | |
| Relationship Next of kin | Name | | | Race Hispanic/Mexican/Latin | | | Sex Female | | |
| Address | | | | City | | State | | | |
| ZIP Code | Phone Type Cell | Phone No | | | | | | | |
| Relationship Relative | Name | | | Race | Sex | Phone Type | | | |
| Phone No | | | | | | | | | |
| Medical | | | | | | | | | |
| Citizenship US CITIZEN | | | Place of Birth California | Occupation STUDENT | NOK Notified? Yes | | | | |
| NOK Name ALVAREZ, YADIRA | | | Mortuary Name | | | Family Request? Yes | | | |
| Injury Place BOAT | | | | Injury Date 09/02/2019 | Injured At Work? No | | | | |
| Injury Premise PLATTS HARBOR SANTA CRUZ ISLAND SANTA BARBARA, CA 95060 (34.02858 N 119.44172 W) | | | | | | | | | |
| How Injured DECEDENT DIED FROM SMOKE INHALATION DURING A BOAT FIRE. | | | | | | | | | |
| Narrative | | | | | | | | | |
| Continuations: Berenice Felipe 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 offshore of Platts Harbor on Santa Cruz Island. See Santa Barbara County Sheriff's Department case number -11415 for full details. | | | | | | | | | |
| Det. 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. | | | | | | | | | |
| Detective Baisa was also called at that time and asked to respond to Ventura Harbor to act as the liaison for the | | | | | | | | | |
| Printed At 01/30/2020 13:00 | | | | Page 2 of 5 | | | Coroner Officer 44/BIEDINGER, C | | |

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Narrative

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 were 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 0730 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.

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 the decedent, near the 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.

A sample of collected hair was packaged and sent along the DNA samples of the decedent for DNA analysis in Sacramento California, at the Sacramento County Coroner's Office.

Physical evidence:

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

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Narrative

Bureau.

Identification of decedent:

The decedent was positively identified by a DNA comparison, with samples submitted by the decedent's mother, Yadira Alvarez. The DNA comparison was conducted via the Sacramento County Coroner's Office.

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.

Examination of decedent:

On 09-11-19, at 1425 hours, an examination of the decedent was conducted at the Coroner's Bureau after the decedent was transported from the Santa Barbara Harbor. The decedent was received supine and clothed in a pair of black in color underwear. A tag with her assigned case number was attached to the body bag.

The decedent well-developed female who was in a stage of decomposition due to submersion in water.

Most of the flesh on her head was gone, along with jaw, leaving only the top of her skull still attached to her spinal cord. A small section of skin was still attached to the sides and back of her head. A minor amount of black in color hair was still attached to the remain skin. Multiple teeth were missing from her upper jaw.

His chest was symmetrical and gelatinous appearing with skin slippage and ribs from her ribcage visible. Seaweed was around her mid-abdomen and down, wrapping around, her right thigh. The decedent's abdomen appeared slightly extended, with skin sloughing on both sides of her lower abdomen.

A pair of black in color underwear were covering her pubic area. Both of the decedent's legs were intact, with skin slippage and sloughing from her pubis down to her feet. Bones and muscle tissue in both her legs and feet were visible from the sloughing of skin.

The decedent's right arm was missing at her shoulder, but her left arm was still attached to her torso. The sloughing of the skin on her left arm was very severe with the bones of her arm and tendons visible, from her armpit to her wrist. Skin was still attached to the top and palm of her hand.

As the decedent was moved from her back to a prone position, her upper torso began to deteriorate, with ribs from her ribcage coming from, along with her left shoulder blade.

The skin on her back was also sloughing and gelatinous like on the front of her torso.

Neither post mortem lividity or rigor mortis could not be detected due to her condition. She did not have any visible or detectable tattoos.

Samples of bodily fluids were obtained from the decedent to include five containers of spleen tissue.

Two tubes of spleen tissue were submitted to Alere Forensics for toxicology analysis. The remaining tissue samples were refrigerated at the Coroner's Bureau pending a need for toxicology analysis.

Additionally, the decedent's heart, a portion of her left femur, and a portion of her left thigh muscle were collected for DNA analysis.

Post mortem examination:

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

Remarks:

On 09-11-19, at approximately 2100 hours, Sheriff Brown contacted the decedent's family, notifying them the decedent had been positively identified via DNA, after she was located near the incident on 09-11-19.

On 09-12-19, at 1000 hours, I called the phone number provided for the decedent's [REDACTED]. She did not answer, so I left a message for her to call me back at the Coroner's Bureau.

Report Officer
44/BIEDINGER, C

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Later in the day, on 09-12-19, I was able to obtain the decedent's [REDACTED] phone number. I called his number and it rang until it went to voicemail, but the voicemail option was full and I was unable to leave a message.

At 0945 hours, on 09-13-19, I received a telephone call from [REDACTED] who told me he was returning my earlier call to his [REDACTED]. He also told me Sheriff Brown informed him I had been trying to contact him.

Peterson apologized for not calling sooner, telling me he and [REDACTED] were still grieving. They were having a difficult time dealing with the decedent's death.

I explained to Peterson the decedent could be released to a mortuary of his and [REDACTED] choice, but he responded [REDACTED] wanted to come to the Santa Barbara Coroner's Bureau and personally talk with about what they needed to do.

Forensic toxicology:

On 09-17-19, a toxicology report was received from Alere Forensics regarding the decedent's carbon monoxide saturation. The report indicated the following:

Carbon monoxide > 10 %

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:

Ethanol 0.04 grams %

On 09-28-19, an additional report was received from Alere Forensics regarding tissue preparation.

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.

Review of the circumstances of this death:

On 09-02-19, at approximately 0443 hours, 16-year-old, Berenice Felipe 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 (FELIPE) 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 Benito and Azzaro Pacific Gardens Chapel in Santa Cruz, Ca. Property or medication was collected.

Santa Barbara County Sheriff



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

(805) 681-4100

19-11950

Supplement No
 0001

Reported Date
 09/17/2019

Officer
AVALOS, T

| Administrative Information | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|----------------------------|---------------------------------|----------|---------------|------------|-----------|---------------|------------|---------------|------------|---------------|-----------|--------|--------------|---------|
| Agency | Santa Barbara County Sheriff | | | Report No | 19-11950 | Supplement No | 0001 | Reported Date | 09/17/2019 | Reported Time | 15:14 | Status | Incident | |
| Report Type | Forensics BOC | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Location | PLATTS HARBOR SANTA CRUZ ISLAND | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| City | Santa Barbara City | Rep Dist | 101 | Area | 1 | Beat | 10 | From Date | 09/02/2019 | From Time | 03:32 | | | |
| Officer | 4688/AVALOS, T | | | Assignment | FORENSICS | | Entered by | 4688 | | Assignment | FORENSICS | | RMS Transfer | Pending |
| Approving Officer | 2901 | | Approval Date | 09/23/2019 | | Approval Time | 10:00:43 | | | | | | | |

Summary Narrative

This report contains information in reference to the Coroners request for Forensics assistance in photo documenting the bodies recovered from the Conception Boat Fire Incident.

Narrative

E-FILE ATTACHMENTS:

None

NARRATIVE:

On Wednesday, 09/11/19 at 1200 hours, Forensics Supervisor Nancy Fabela advised me that my assistance was needed at the Coroner's Office with photo documentation of an item that was recovered from the Santa Cruz Island Incident.

At 1400 hours, I arrived at the Coroner's Office and met up with Detective Biedinger, Detective Henslin and Dr. Montes.

PHOTO DOCUMENTATION (Body #37, female):

On Wednesday, 09/11/19, at 1425 hours, I began overall photo documentation on a body bag labeled #37. Its contents were that of a female body. Upon opening the body bag we found a decomposing female body. She was wearing only a pair of black underwear and no other clothing was present. No tattoos or scars were noted. A tracheal exam was performed by Dr. Montez and photographs were taken of the exam.

Photo documentation was completed at 1458 hours.

All digital photos were later uploaded into the South County Forensics digital imaging computer under case # 19-11950 for future reference.

-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 # 19-11950

FORENSIC LABORATORY REPORT

AF # 2019-003355

To: Brice Bruening
Santa Barbara County Sheriff-Coroner

Sample Collection Date: September 11, 2019

Decedent: Berenice Felipe

The following evidence was submitted to the Laboratory by a representative of the Santa Barbara County Sheriff-Coroner on 9/12/2019 via FedEx:

Submission 01: One tape sealed and initialed screw top metal canister containing a second screw top metal canister containing two tubes of spleen tissue with paperwork marked in part "#37 Doe Jane". The name "Felipe, Berenice" was supplied on 9-13-19.

Item # 01-A: One purple top tube with approximately 2 grams of spleen collected at 1450 hours.

Item # 01-B: One purple top tube with approximately 2 grams of spleen collected at 1450 hours.

Service Request:

F1048X - Misc. Chemicals (Qualitative) - Other

Confirmation/Screen Results

| Analyte Name | Concentration | Method | Sample Type |
|--------------|---------------|--------------|-------------|
| Cyanide | Not Detected | Color Screen | Spleen |



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 15, 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/g.



ALERE FORENSICS AT REDWOOD TOXICOLOGY LABORATORY

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

Agency # 19-11950

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Item # 01-A: One purple top tube with approximately 2 grams of spleen collected at 1450 hours.

Item # 01-B: One purple top tube with approximately 2 grams of spleen collected at 1450 hours.

Service Request:

F9013F - Tissue Prep

Confirmation/Screen Results

| Analyte Name | Concentration | Method | Sample Type |
|--------------------|---------------|--------|-------------|
| Tissue Preparation | | | Spleen |



2019-003355-0004

Respectfully,

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

Lauren 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

None



ALERE FORENSICS AT REDWOOD TOXICOLOGY LABORATORY

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

Agency # 19-11950

FORENSIC LABORATORY REPORT

AF # 2019-003355

To: Brice Bruening
Santa Barbara County Sheriff-Coroner

Sample Collection Date: September 11, 2019

Decedent: Berenice Felipe

The following evidence was submitted to the Laboratory by a representative of the Santa Barbara County Sheriff-Coroner on 9/12/2019 via FedEx:

Submission 01: One tape sealed and initialed screw top metal canister containing a second screw top metal canister containing two tubes of spleen tissue with paperwork marked in part "#37 Doe Jane". The name "Felipe, Berenice" was supplied on 9-13-19.

Item # 01-A: One purple top tube with approximately 2 grams of spleen collected at 1450 hours.

Item # 01-B: One purple top tube with approximately 2 grams of spleen collected at 1450 hours.

Service Request:

FP222X - Expanded Pnl (Confirm) - Other

Confirmation/Screen Results

| Analyte Name | Concentration | Method | Sample Type |
|-----------------------|---------------|--------------|-------------|
| Ethanol | 0.04 grams % | GC-Headspace | Spleen |
| Acetone, IPA and MeOH | Not Detected | GC-Headspace | Spleen |
| Basic Drug Screen | None Detected | LC-MS-MS | Spleen |



2019-003355-0001

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 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

IPA - isopropanol, MeOH - methanol



ALERE FORENSICS AT REDWOOD TOXICOLOGY L
 3650 Westwind Blvd. Santa Rosa, CA
 Phone 866-584-0887 FAX 707-70

Agency # 19-11950

FORENSIC LABORATORY REPORT

AF # 2019-01

To: Chad Biedinger
 Santa Barbara County Sheriff-Coroner

Sample Collection Date: September 11, 2019
 Decedent: Berenice Felipe

The following evidence was submitted to the Laboratory by a representative of the Santa Barbara County Sheriff-Coroner on 9/12/2019 via FedEx:
 Submission 01: One tape sealed and initialed screw top metal canister containing a second screw top metal canister containing two tubes of spleen tissue with paperwork marked in part "#37 Doe Jane". The name "Felipe, Berenice" was supplied on 9-13-19.
 Item # 01-A: One purple top tube with approximately 2 grams of spleen collected at 1450 hours.
 Item # 01-B: One purple top tube with approximately 2 grams of spleen collected at 1450 hours.

Service Request:

FP760X - Carboxyhemoglobin/Carbon Monoxide - Other

Confirmation/Screen Results

| Analyte Name | Concentration | Method | Sample Type |
|-----------------|---------------|-----------------|-------------|
| Carbon Monoxide | > 10 % | Micro Diffusion | Spleen |
| Carbon Monoxide | Unsuitable | AVOXimeter 4000 | Spleen |



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 17, 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