

Investigative Synopsis of the Officer Involved Death of La Crosse PD- OID

On Sunday, August 13, 2017 at approximately 6:00 p.m., the Division of Criminal Investigation (DCI) received a request from the La Crosse Police Department to respond to the scene of an officer involved death/shooting at the intersection of 8th Street and Johnson Street in the City of La Crosse.

On August 13, 2017 at approximately 5:01 p.m., the La Crosse Police Department was dispatched to Houska Park in the City of La Crosse for a male subject who had stolen a vehicle at gunpoint. The female reported her infant was still in the vehicle. The suspect was described as a white male, who was in possession of a handgun.

Officer Hughes located the vehicle; he activated his emergency lights and siren and tried to stop the vehicle. The suspect, who was later identified as Roger J. Burzinski, didn't stop the vehicle. Officer Hughes pursued Burzinski and entered into a construction zone near the area of 8th Street and Johnson Street. Burzinski struck a parked car; Officer Hughes was able to utilize his squad car to pin the vehicle Burzinski had stolen between his squad and the parked vehicle.

Officer Hughes approached the vehicle on the driver's side and used his expandable baton to break out both the front and rear driver's side windows. The infant was in a child safety seat on the driver's side back seat of the vehicle. Officer Hughes gave commands to Burzinski to stop and get out of the vehicle. Burzinski didn't comply with Officer Hughes' orders, and continued to try to escape by rocking the vehicle forward and backward. Officer Adey arrived at the location and approached from the front of the vehicle on the passenger's side of the stolen vehicle. Both Officer Hughes and Officer Adey had their firearms drawn and were pointing them at Burzinski. Both Officer Hughes and Officer Adey told Burzinski to get out of the vehicle but Burzinski continued to not comply with the officers' orders. Both Officer Hughes and Officer Adey said they observed Burzinski lean toward the center console of the vehicle. Both officers observed Burzinski sit up straight and saw that he was holding a firearm; Burzinski then pointed the firearm toward the officers. Officer Hughes fired two rounds and Officer Adey fired three rounds toward Burzinski. Officer Hughes fired from the driver's side of the vehicle toward Burzinski in the direction of the front right side of the vehicle. Officer Adey fired through the closed passenger's side window toward Burzinski.

Burzinski was struck by the gunfire. Officers were on the scene and immediately removed Burzinski from the vehicle and started to administer first aid to Burzinski. A short time later, the La Crosse Fire Department and paramedics arrived and took over the administration of first aid to Burzinski. Burzinski was transported to Gunderson Health System Hospital in La Crosse and was pronounced deceased.

Wisconsin Division of Criminal Investigation Case Report
Case/Report Number: 17-5600/51

DCI responded to the scene with seven Special Agents – S/As Welsch, Ince, Kleinhans, Frederick, Ruff, Vosters and Hynek – and Special Agent in Charge Powell. S/A Welsch was assigned as the lead investigator, and S/A Frederick was assigned as the secondary investigator. The Wisconsin State Patrol Traffic Reconstruction Unit (WSP TRU) assisted with the investigation and created a scene diagram.

Family members of Roger Burzinski were identified and a death notification was made by DCI and Ashwaubenon Public Safety. Wisconsin Crime Victim Services forms were also provided to the family.

DCI S/As Welsch and Frederick interviewed involved officers Hughes and Adey on August 15, 2017. An additional five officers from the La Crosse Police Department responded, and were also interviewed by DCI agents.

A neighborhood canvass was conducted by the DCI and the La Crosse Police Department; a total of approximately fifteen people were interviewed during the neighborhood canvass.

Squad video and audio from a total of eleven squads was obtained and reviewed by DCI. Body cameras were not worn by any of the responding officers, and no security cameras were located in the area.

Evidence from this investigation included two officer firearms, five cartridge casings and five spent bullets; all of the evidence was transmitted to the Wisconsin State Crime Laboratory for examination. A cell phone and a BB pistol were recovered and placed into evidence.

An autopsy of Roger Burzinski was conducted at the Dane County Medical Examiner's Office on August 14, 2017 by Dr. Vincent Tranchida, and was attended by DCI S/A Fernandez. The autopsy revealed that there were a total of four gunshot wounds to Burzinski's torso and extremities. The gunshot wounds to the torso resulted in the death of Burzinski.

On Wednesday, September 6, 2017 the completed investigative file as of that date was turned over to District Attorney Timothy Gruenke from the La Crosse County District Attorney's Office for review.