

Oct. 22, 2018

Investigation into death of man following contact with police

The Alberta Serious Incident Response Team (ASIRT) has been directed to investigate the circumstances surrounding the death of a 48-year-old man following an encounter with a Lethbridge Police Service (LPS) officer on the evening of Oct. 3, 2018.

On Oct. 3, 2018, at approximately 5:20 p.m., LPS officers responded to a report of a disturbance at an alley off Stafford Drive South, between 3 Avenue S. and 4 Avenue S. Upon arrival, officers dealt with two men who were identified as having been involved in the disturbance. A 41-year-old man was placed under arrest for breaching conditions of release, including a no-contact provision with the other man. As officers were placing the arrested man into a police vehicle, the second man became involved and a confrontation occurred between an officer and the 48-year-old man. The officer pushed the man away with one or both hands to the man's chest. The man stumbled backwards and then fell straight back, hitting his head on the pavement.

Following the fall, the man appeared to be in an altered state, although his eyes were open and he appeared to attempt speaking. Emergency Medical Services (EMS) personnel were called to assess and assist the man. The man's condition deteriorated and upon EMS arrival, he was in medical distress and unresponsive.

The man was transported and admitted to hospital. LPS made a notification to the Director of Law Enforcement, pursuant to the provisions of the Police Act, once the severity of the man's medical condition was known, and on Oct. 4, 2018, ASIRT was directed to investigate.

Over the course of the next few days, the man's condition did not improve and in the early hours of Oct. 8, 2018, the man died in hospital. An autopsy was conducted on Oct. 9, 2018, but cause of death has not yet been determined.

ASIRT's investigation will focus on the police contact with the 48-year-old man to determine if police conduct may have caused his death, and, if so, whether that conduct was lawful. LPS maintains responsibility for the investigation into the conduct of the 41-year-old man arrested at the scene. With the investigation underway, ASIRT will not make any further comment until the matter is concluded.

ASIRT's mandate is to effectively, independently and objectively investigate incidents involving police that have resulted in serious injury or death to any person, as well as serious or sensitive allegations of police misconduct.

Media inquiries may be directed to:

ASIRT Media Line
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