

Sheriff's office settles with family of dead jail inmate

The Deschutes County Sheriff's Office last week settled a lawsuit filed by the family of a man who died in custody at the Deschutes County Jail. The \$15 million suit was settled for \$1.025 million.

Edwin Burl Mays, III, died of a drug overdose in December 2014 while incarcerated at the Deschutes County Jail.

The County will pay \$700,000 of the settlement from its Risk Management Fund; the remainder of the settlement will be paid by the County's insurance company.

A County statement noted that the agreement "is not an acknowledgement of liability or wrongdoing — a fact confirmed by the Oregon

Department of Justice's investigation and also by the terms of the settlement agreement, which provides that the County and the individual defendants expressly deny responsibility for the unfortunate death of Mr. Mays."

The lawsuit contended that deputies were negligent in handling Mays' condition. Surveillance video indicated that some deputies mocked Mays.

Sheriff Shane Nelson said: "...The Oregon Department of Justice investigation found that the deputies performed their duties under their legal obligations to Mr. Mays, and this settlement is not an admission of responsibility for the methamphetamine overdose by

Mr. Mays. The unprofessional conduct by some of the deputies on December 14, 2014 was dealt with by the Sheriff's Office in disciplinary actions in April of 2015."

Nelson said that the Sheriff's Office has taken several steps since December 2014, adding full-time nurses for 24-hour/seven-days-a-week staffing in the jail.

"We have entered into an ongoing contract with a local ER physician, who has reviewed Sheriff's Office policies and procedures for nursing staff and deputies in both the corrections and patrol divisions. We have updated our policies and procedures and continue to consult with the physician

regarding on-going medical questions," Nelson said. "We have purchased AliveLock Monitoring wristbands for use in the jail, which monitor heart rate and O2 saturation for inmates who need close medical attention.

"We have added naloxone, an antidote for opioid overdoses, to kits for corrections and patrol deputies, recognizing the increasing use of opioid abuse in Central Oregon."

The Sheriff's Office has also added additional automated external defibrillators to the jail and have upgraded the emergency bags in the jail.

"We added a medical/mental health section of the jail during the expansion,

to increase the capacity and improve the monitoring of at risk inmates," Nelson noted.

“...The Oregon Department of Justice investigation found that the deputies performed their duties under their legal obligations to Mr. Mays, and this settlement is not an admission of responsibility...”
— Sheriff Shane Nelson

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