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REGIONAL

NEWS FROM THE NORTHWEST

HIV notification asked for by police union

■ **AIDS:** Controversy surrounds notifying Portland police if victims are carrying blood-borne diseases

PORTLAND, Ore. (AP) — Portland's police union says officers should be warned by dispatchers when they go on a call involving a person with a blood-borne disease, such as the virus that causes AIDS.

But Portland Police Chief Charles Moose says union officers are selfish for asking for such notification.

"It's strictly a matter of life and death for the officer," said Jeff Barker, the Portland Police Association president.

The union wants dispatchers to call for "universal precautions" if they are told that officers may encounter a blood-borne disease.

The union disagrees with a city of Portland policy issued in June that forbids dispatchers from broadcasting that a person has an ailment such as HIV, the virus that causes AIDS, or hepatitis.

The policy also prohibits the "universal precautions" warning.

The union notified the Oregon Occupational Safety and Health Division that it intended to file a complaint concerning the policy, but the state agency said it would not investigate.

The police chief said officers should always take precautions to protect themselves, but he doesn't want to stigmatize people with AIDS.

"It's their desire that we put red stars on people's heads," Moose said. "They're just really a selfish group."

William Warren, who worked with the Portland Police Bureau on this issue as part of the bureau's sexual minorities round table, supports the policy.

He said the city trains officers to protect themselves against blood-borne diseases. He said dispatchers should try to inform officers if anyone on a call may be bleeding.

However, broadcasting that a person at a certain address is HIV positive could lead to retaliation from anyone listening to the police scanner, he said.

Officer Katie Potter said she would like to be notified if she is going on a call involving someone with the HIV virus.

"It's not like before every call we put latex gloves on our hands and walk in in a rubber suit," she said.

"It's simply just another officer safety issue for us, and that is a deadly issue."

Dispatchers for the Oregon State Police use a code number to warn when a call involves an injured person who may have a blood-borne disease, said Lt. Bernie Giusto, a state police spokesperson.

"Risk is risk," Giusto said. "You have to balance the right to privacy with the right to protect the general public's interest as well as the officers at that scene."

Oregon Daily
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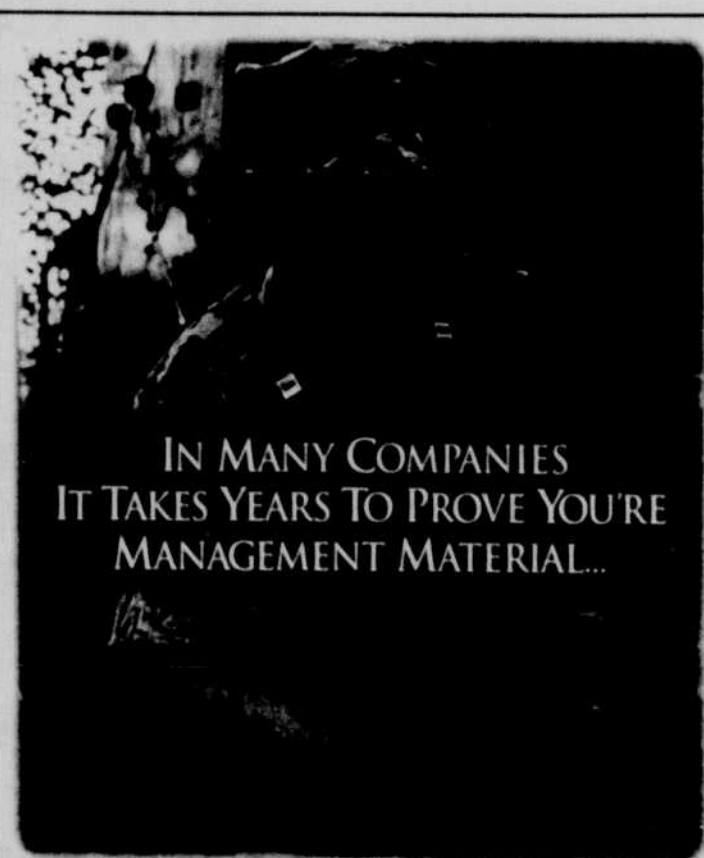
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