

Police: Prank led to police shooting unarmed Kansas man

Associated Press

KANSAS CITY, Mo. (AP) — Police and the FBI are investigating whether an argument over an online game prompted a hoax call that led to a house where an officer shot and killed a Kansas man who apparently wasn't involved in the dispute.

Wichita Deputy Police Chief Troy Livingston on Friday blamed a "prankster" who called 911 and made up a story about a shooting and kidnapping. He did not mention reports that an argument over online gaming was at the heart of the prank, although he said investigators had made good progress tracking online leads.

Police have not disclosed the name of the man who was killed Thursday evening, but relatives identified him as Andrew Finch, 28.

Livingston, speaking at a news conference, said the hoax call was a case of "swatting," in which a person makes up a false report to get a SWAT team to descend on an address.

"Due to the actions of a prankster we have an innocent victim," Livingston said. He said no one has been arrested in connection with the hoax.

Police played audio of the call to 911. A man said his father had been shot in the head. He said he was holding his mother and a sibling at gunpoint. The caller, speaking with relative calm, said he poured gasoline inside the home "and I might just set it on fire."

Several officers arrived and surrounded the home, braced for a hostage situation. When Finch went to the door police told him to put his hands up and move slowly.



Lisa Finch, surrounded by family members reacts to the killing of her son Andrew Finch after he was shot Thursday evening by police in Wichita, Kan.

But Livingston said the man moved a hand toward the area of his waistband — a common place where guns are concealed. An officer, fearing the man was reaching for a gun, fired a single shot. Finch died a few minutes later at a hospital. Livingston said Finch was unarmed.

The officer, a seven-year veteran of the department, is on paid leave pending the investigation.

The Finch family on Friday allowed reporters inside their home. Lisa Finch told

them her son was not a gamer.

"What gives the cops the right to open fire?" she asked. "That cop murdered my son over a false report in the first place."

Lisa Finch said the family was forced outside barefoot in freezing cold and handcuffed after the shooting. She said her granddaughter was forced to step over her dying uncle and that no guns were found in the home.

Dexerto, an online news service focused on gaming, reported that the series of events

began with an online argument over a \$1 or \$2 wager in a "Call of Duty" game on UMG Gaming, which operates online tournaments including one involving "Call of Duty."

"We woke this morning to horrible news about an innocent man losing his life," UMG spokeswoman Shannon Gerritzen said in an email to The Associated Press. "Our hearts go out to his loved ones. We are doing everything we can to assist the authorities in this matter." She declined to disclose other details.

In addition to the 911 call, police also released a brief video of body camera footage from another officer at the scene. It was difficult to see clearly what happened.

The FBI estimates that roughly 400 cases of swatting occur annually, with some using caller ID spoofing to disguise their number. An FBI supervisor in Kansas City, Missouri, which covers all of Kansas, said the agency joined in the investigation at the request of local police.

In other cases of apparent swatting, three families in Florida in January had to evacuate their homes after a detective received an anonymous email claiming bombs had been placed at the address.

A 20-year-old Maryland man was shot in the face with rubber bullets by police in 2015 after a fake hostage situation was reported at his home.

Rep. Katherine Clark, a Massachusetts Democrat, introduced an anti-swatting bill in 2015 — then was herself the victim of swatting. Armed officers in 2016 responded to an anonymous call claiming an active shooter was at Clark's home.

BRIEFLY

3+ months after Maria, barely half of Puerto Rico has power

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico (AP) — Puerto Rico authorities said Friday that nearly half of power customers in the U.S. territory still lack electricity more than three months after Hurricane Maria, sparking outrage among islanders who accuse the government of mismanaging its response to the Category 4 storm.

Officials said 55 percent of the nearly 1.5 million customers have power, marking the first time the government has provided that statistic since Maria hit on Sept. 20 with winds of up to 154 mph. Officials had previously reported only power generation, which stands at nearly 70 percent of pre-storm levels.

"It's just extraordinary that it is still so far away from being 100 percent recovered," said Susan Tierney, a senior adviser for Denver-based consulting company Analysis Group who testified before a U.S. Senate committee on efforts to restore power in Puerto Rico. "I'm not aware of any time in recent decades since the U.S. has electrified the entire economy that there has been an outage of this magnitude."

One of Puerto Rico's 78 municipalities remains entirely without power, and it's unclear when some electricity will be restored to the central mountain town of Ciales.

Crews this week restored power for the first time to parts of the southeast coastal town of Yabucoa, which received the first hit from Maria.

Officials: Deadly NYC fire lit by child playing with stove

NEW YORK (AP) — A preschooler toying with the burners on his mother's stove accidentally sparked New York City's deadliest fire in decades, an inferno that quickly overtook an apartment building and blocked the main escape route, the fire commissioner said Friday.

A dozen people died, and four others were fighting for their lives a day after the flames broke out in the century-old building near the Bronx Zoo.

The 3½-year-old-boy, his mother and another child were able to flee their first-floor apartment. But they left the apartment door open behind them, and it acted like a chimney that drew smoke and flames into a stairwell.

From there, the fire spread throughout the five-story building, authorities said.

The city housing department said investigators would look into why the door did not close automatically, though Mayor Bill de Blasio said there was "nothing problematic about the building that contributed to this tragedy."

At least 20 people scrambled out via fire escapes on a bitterly cold night, but others could not.

"People had very little time to react," Fire Commissioner Daniel Nigro said. Firefighters arrived in just over three minutes and saved some people, but "this loss is unprecedented."

One family lost four members: Karen Stewart-Francis, her daughters and their cousin, 19-year-old Shawntay Young, relatives said.

Sue Grafton, writer of popular 'alphabet' mysteries, dies

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Sue Grafton, author of the best-selling "alphabet series" of mystery novels, has died in Santa Barbara. She was 77.

Grafton was surrounded by family, including husband Steven Humphrey, when she died Thursday after a two-year battle with cancer, her daughter, Jamie Clark, posted on the author's website.

"Although we knew this was coming, it was unexpected and fast. She had been fine up until just a few days ago, and then things moved quickly," the posting said.

Grafton began her "alphabet series" in 1982 with "A is for Alibi." Her most recent book, "Y is for Yesterday," was published in August.

"Many of you also know that she was adamant that her books would never be turned into movies or TV shows, and in that same vein, she would never allow a ghost writer to write in her name," her daughter wrote. "Because of all of those things, and out of the deep abiding love and respect for our dear sweet Sue, as far as we in the family are concerned, the alphabet now ends at Y."

Humphrey said Grafton had been struggling to find an idea for "Z" while undergoing treatment for rare and usually fatal cancer of the appendix, which was discovered in a routine colonoscopy.

"Nothing's been written," he told The Associated Press in a telephone interview. "There is no Z."

Random drawing scheduled to break tie in disputed House race

RICHMOND, Va. (AP) — As Democrats and Republicans continued partisan sniping Friday over a House seat that could determine the balance of power in the Virginia House of Delegates, state elections officials moved to break the deadlock by scheduling a random drawing to pick the winner.

The Virginia Board of Elections said it will pick the winner's name in the Newport News-based 94th District next Thursday, unless a recount court decides to intervene.

The race between Democrat Shelly Simonds and Republican Del. David Yancey has seesawed since the Nov. 7 election. Initially, it appeared that Yancey had won by 10 votes, but a recount put Simonds ahead by a single vote.

A three-judge recount court later declared the race a tie after agreeing with the Yancey campaign that a disputed ballot was a vote for him. On Wednesday, Simonds asked the court to reconsider, but the panel has not yet responded.

The fight over the seat has been intense as Republicans try to hold on to a majority in the House after a bruising election in which Democrats erased the 66-34 advantage held by Republicans, as voters vented anger toward Republican President Donald Trump.

During a conference call with reporters Friday, GOP House Leader Kirk Cox — who hopes to become the next speaker of the House — criticized Democrats for causing "politically motivated delays" in deciding the race.

Apple apologizes for slowing older iPhones

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) — Apple apologized for secretly slowing down older iPhones, a move it said was necessary to avoid unexpected shutdowns related to battery fatigue.

Many customers had interpreted the move as a way to for Apple to juice demand for newer iPhone models, their suspicions fueled by the fact that the company didn't initially disclose the slowdowns or its reasons for them.

Apple also said it will cut the price of a battery replacement by \$50 to \$29 through next year. New batteries had previously cost \$79 for those who didn't purchase the Apple Care maintenance plan.

"We apologize," the company said on its website. "We have never — and would never — do anything to intentionally shorten the life of any Apple product, or degrade the user experience to drive customer upgrades."

The replacement plan begins in late January for anyone with an iPhone 6 or later that requires a new battery.

Apple said it will also issue an update to its operating system early next year to give users a better understanding of the health of their battery, so they can see if its condition is affecting performance.

Hostile customer reaction was swift after a report this month uncovered the intentional slowdown in speed tests. Only then did Apple acknowledge that the slowdown was due to a fix it rolled out last year. Shares dropped 2.5 percent Tuesday — also dinged by analysts predicting lower-than-expected demand for iPhone X.



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PLASTIC IS NO LONGER RECYCLABLE

WHAT: Mixed plastics #1-#7 is no longer recyclable. Our depot collection containers for this material near Fallen Field and at the Transfer Station will be removed on or before January 1, 2018.

WHY: The only market for these materials was China. Effective January 1, 2018 China is implementing its "National Sword" policy to increase the environmental quality in its own country, which will stop all mixed paper and mixed plastics from being imported. This is a national and international issue, but the effects are very local. There are no markets to absorb what China has refused to accept.

WHEN: By January 1, 2018 the plastics collection containers will be removed and these plastics must be placed in the trash. Plastic water bottles and many other drink containers may still be taken for the \$0.10 redemption at grocery stores or redemption centers.

WHO: All Pendleton residents and surrounding areas who use Pendleton Sanitary Service recycling collection containers.

OTHER COMMUNITIES: Other communities that have "co-mingled" recycling (all recyclables in one roll cart at their home) will be very severely impacted by these market changes. Pendleton's impact is small in comparison.

WHAT CAN I DO?: Continue to recycle whenever and whatever is possible. Recycling is still the right thing to do – it saves energy, natural resources, and creates a sustainable future, but be very careful about contamination. If an item is questionable for recycling – "When in doubt, throw it out" is the best policy. For complete recycling information, please visit our website at pendletonsanitaryservice.com or call our office at (541) 276-1271.

Pendleton Sanitary Service, Inc. is committed to offering a recycling collection program supported by our customers and turning this difficult situation into an opportunity to strengthen the future of recycling. If markets for recycled plastics become available in the future, we are committed to reinstate our collection of plastics and adapt to current market conditions.

LOCATION: 5500 NW Rieth Road • Pendleton, OR 97801
PHONE: (541) 276-1271 • OFFICE HOURS: Mon - Fri: 8AM - 4PM