

Investigation continues into Shearer's explosion

Piping system failure may have contributed to cause, but testing continues

ERICK PETERSON
Hermiston Herald

Fire Marshal Scott Goff reported a piping system failure may have played a role in the Feb. 22 explosion at the Shearer's Foods plant in Hermiston.

But Goff, of Umatilla Fire District No. 1, said it will be months yet before he has a report ready on what happened that resulted in the fire and destruction of the facility.

Since the emergency, Goff said he and other investigators have been searching through the wreckage for answers.

"There's still some testing going on," he said.

Representatives from Shearer's, insurance and equipment companies have joined him in his efforts, he said, which has contributed to

delays in results. But he said investigators have found "a failure in the temporary piping system for the thermal fluid that was heated by the temporary boiler."

According to Goff, the boiler was brought in at the end of 2021 to replace a boiler that was down for maintenance. As Shearer's was having difficulty obtaining parts for the regular boiler, the company had not returned it to operation.

There are Oregon state codes and standards related to the installation of boilers and pressure vessels. Goff said state officials had not run inspections or issued permits about the temporary boiler while it was operating.

He said nearly 80 interviews were conducted after the fire, and he was "several months out" from completing a report. Such a report, he said, would contain witness testimony.

As for lab test results, Goff said on May 2 that he had no dates for when they would be completed.



Kathy Aney/Hermiston Herald

The remains of Shearer's Foods sit quietly on Thursday, May 5, 2022, after an explosion and fire more than two months ago destroyed the Hermiston business. Fire Marshal Scott Goff said investigators have found "a failure in the temporary piping system for the thermal fluid that was heated by the temporary boiler," but any report on what happened is months away.

Hermiston man arrested for fatal attack in Kennewick

By CAMERON PROBERT
Tri-City Herald

A Hermiston man is accused of the violent attack that killed a well-known Kennewick musician.

Christopher R. Calvert, 44, was caught in rural Skamania County, Washington, driving Clayton "Clay" Wick's car about 3 p.m. Thursday, May 5, Kennewick police Lt. Jason Kiel said during a media briefing May 6.

Wick was a former bassist for the Walla Walla Symphony.

Calvert was an acquaintance of Wick's, police said.

Police think Calvert took the 2012 Honda CRV after killing the man inside Wick's Buchanan Street home.

A housekeeper discovered Wick's body two days earlier, according to Kennewick police. Investigators suspect the 76-year-old, who lived alone, had been dead

for three to five days before she found his body.

Police said it appears Wick died after a "violent assault and blunt force trauma." The results of an autopsy conducted May 5 have not returned, said officials.

Washington State Patrol crime lab technicians spent two days documenting and gathering evidence from the "violent encounter," said a news release.

Many of the details about Wick's death remain under investigation, including the reason for the attack and how they knew each other.

"The motive is not completely known at this time," said the release.

They had been seen together at the house at least one other time, Kiel said.

Missing car

When police began investigating, they noticed Wick's CRV was missing and thought Calvert had

stolen it, Kiel said. A warrant for car theft was issued for his arrest May 3.

After more investigating, detectives were able to link him to the murder investigation and a judge agreed to issue a nationwide, \$1 million first-degree murder warrant for his arrest.

Police tracked him to Stevenson, Washington, a small community about an hour east of Vancouver, on May 5.

Skamania County Sheriff's deputies along with the U.S. Marshals Fugitive Task Force and Kennewick detectives found Calvert driving around that area around 3 p.m. May 5.

When police tried to pull him over, Calvert sped away, starting a five-minute chase that ended when officers forced the car into a ditch in a rural area of Skamania County.

Calvert was arrested and taken back to the Benton

County jail where he was booked on suspicion of auto theft and first-degree premeditated murder with the aggravating circum-

stances of invasion of privacy, lack of remorse and excessive injuries.

Calvert has a lengthy criminal history, mostly

from Oregon that includes convictions for eluding police, possession of meth and manufacturing a controlled substance.

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