

## Attorney General announces investigation, calls for force policies

Written by gallupsun

Tuesday, 09 June 2020 16:40

---

*Use-of-Force review, calls on Legislature to immediately institute body-worn camera law and chokehold ban*

SANTA FE - Attorney General Hector Balderas announced that the Office of the Attorney General is investigating the death of Rodney Lynch for possible illegal use of force by members of the Gallup Police Department.

On June 28, 2019, the New Mexico State Police Investigations Bureau was contacted to investigate a use-of-force incident involving an intoxicated male and the Gallup Police Department. Officers were dispatched to the J. C. Penney to remove an intoxicated male, later identified as Rodney Lynch, 41, of Gallup. Lynch became combative with the officers after being transported, and he was later found unconscious by a GPD sergeant. Lynch was transported to an Albuquerque hospital, where he later died and was pronounced by the Office of the Medical Investigator.

Balderas also called on the Legislature to create uniform use of force policies in law.

## Attorney General announces investigation, calls for force policies

Written by gallupsun  
Tuesday, 09 June 2020 16:40

---

“[The policies include] increased transparency and accountability protects the community, as well as law enforcement,” said Balderas June 9. “I am asking that the Legislature immediately create uniform use of force policies that ban deadly tactics and ensure both officer and community safety statewide.”

The Office of the Attorney General is recommending that the Legislature undertake systemic reform, but as they address much needed structural changes, Balderas urges the Legislature to immediately institute reforms that increase law enforcement transparency and accountability. These reforms should include a requirement that law enforcement officers in the state wear body cameras when on duty, and that they should be prohibited from using chokeholds when engaging in any arrest.

The call for increased transparency in law enforcement interactions with the public is in keeping with Balderas’ work as member of the New Mexico House of Representatives, where he passed legislation requiring the recording of police custodial interrogations. That reform, as with this recommendation, ensured that law enforcement officials can be held accountable for their actions during any interaction with the public.

In 2016, Balderas ordered the Law Enforcement Academy Board to undertake a statewide review of use of force policies in every law enforcement agency in the state. While the Board does not govern department policies, the review was undertaken to begin to identify gaps in department policies and to build recommendations for best practices to be used by those agencies. Ultimately, the review exposed a patchwork of policies across the state, with some agencies not reporting any policy on file. In addition, Third Judicial District Attorney Mark D’Antonio has asked Balderas to advocate for uniform, statewide use of force policies, including

## Attorney General announces investigation, calls for force policies

Written by gallupsun  
Tuesday, 09 June 2020 16:40

---

banning the use of chokehold restraint techniques.

The LEAB review and the District Attorney's request make clear the state cannot rely on individual agencies to enact these policies, and so the Legislature must codify them in law to ensure that they are robust and uniform.

