

Dropped cell phone precedes tragedy

Written by Staff Reports
Friday, 04 June 2021 04:21



A cell phone dropped into a leech vault at the Northern New Mexico Regional Solid Waste Authority where three men were replacing a pump off Highway 371, north of Thoreau a little before 11:26 am on May 25. It wasn't an easy retrieval. The opening was similar in size to a manhole cover. The platform at the bottom was over 10 feet down with a ladder system attached to the inside wall.

It was initially reported to the McKinley County Sheriff's Office that one employee went to find a tool to recover the phone. But, when he returned he did not see the other two employees around the truck.

He looked into the vault and saw that both employees were at the bottom. Neither one of them was moving.

He did not enter the vault because of an overwhelming odor he described as a smell like gas.

Sheriff's Deputies along with McKinley County Fire and EMS from Thoreau and Prewitt were dispatched to the scene around 11:46 am, and fire personnel detected high levels of Hydrogen sulfide and methane inside the vault. One of their staff members descended into the vault wearing special gear. Both men were determined to be dead.

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Gallup Fire Department was called out to extricate the two men from the hole. A tripod apparatus and ropes were utilized to pull the men topside.

The exact cause of death is under investigation by the Office of the Medical Investigator.

At this time MCSO does not believe that they fell into the vault and there is no evidence of foul play.

The names of the two men that died are not being released at this time.

More information is expected once the autopsies are completed at the Office of the Medical Investigator in Albuquerque.

This table represents a seven-day period of Gallup Police Dept. incident calls.

May 19 - May 25

INCIDENT TYPE

NUMBER OF CALLS

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WELFARE CHECK

157

INTOXICATED

135

TRAFFIC-RELATED

72

POLICE REQUEST

53

DOMESTIC

35

ALARM

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34

LAW

27

ACCIDENT

21

ROUTINE PATROL

21

DISORDERLY SUBJECT

19

All other calls including.

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attempt to locate, burglary, battery,

assault, party call disturbance, etc.

219