

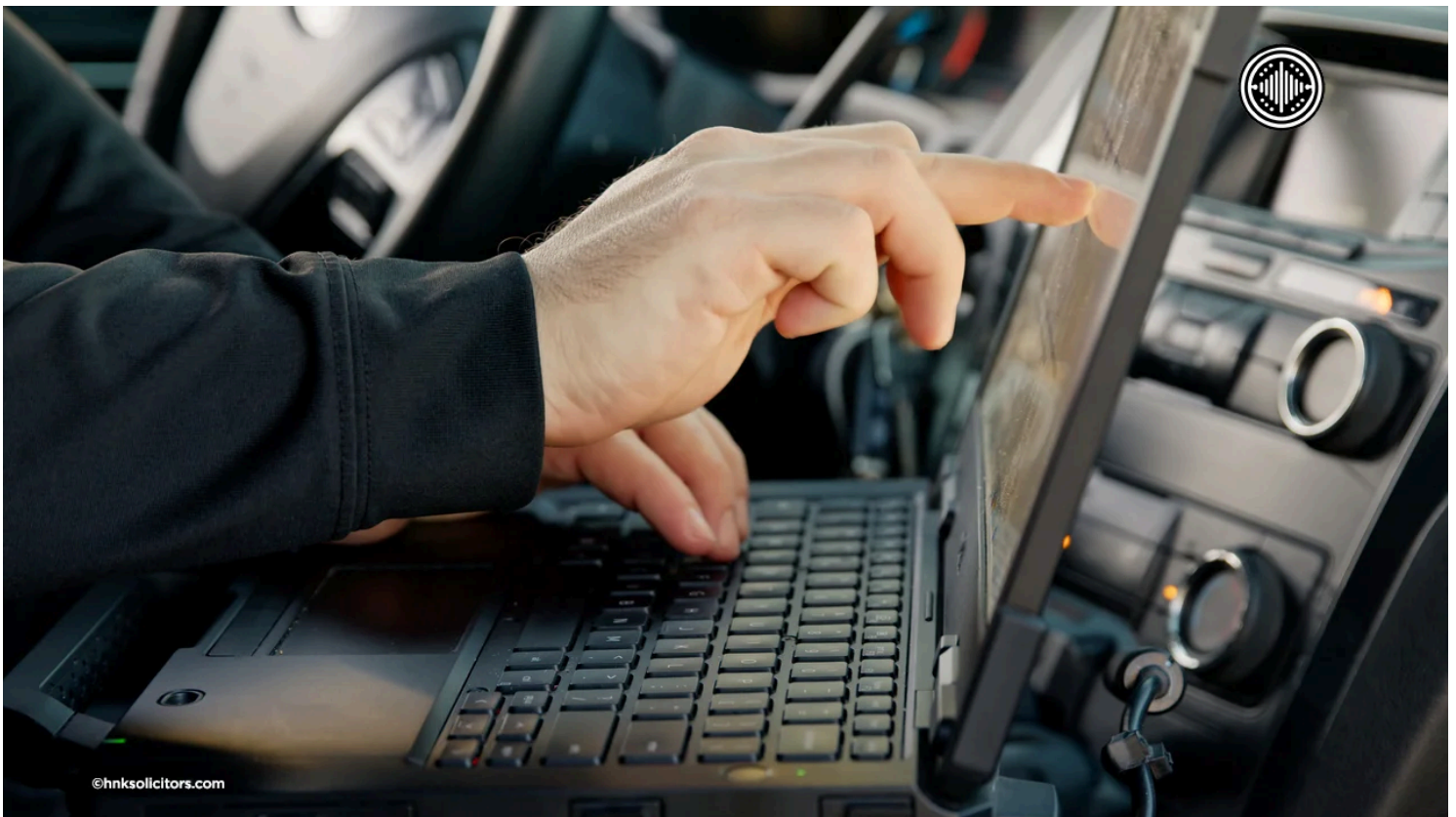
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Oregon Officer Allegedly Neglected Dying Man in Hot Patrol Car, Focused on TikTok and Texts: Lawsuit

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A lawsuit filed by the family of Nathan Bradford Smith, a 33-year-old Oregon man, claims Coos Bay police officers neglected his medical distress, leaving him to die in a hot patrol car while one officer watched TikTok videos and sent personal texts. Smith succumbed to heat stroke, worsened by methamphetamine use, during a July 2024 arrest, with the lawsuit targeting officers Benjamin Martin, Tristan Smith, and Wesley O'Connor, as well as the city of Coos Bay, for negligence and deliberate indifference.

On July 7, 2024, at approximately 5 p.m., Coos Bay police responded to reports of Smith, who suffered from schizophrenia and bipolar disorder, behaving erratically outside a Motel 6. Callers expressed concern for his safety, noting he was “flailing around” on the ground while wearing a heavy coat and rain pants, despite the 68-degree weather, according to court documents obtained by The Post. Smith, who had a history of methamphetamine use, had been smoking the drug earlier that day and was speaking “quickly and incomprehensibly” during prior police encounters, the lawsuit states.

Officers Martin, Smith, and O’Connor arrested Smith, who struggled to breathe as they handcuffed him on the ground, a state police officer later noted after reviewing body camera footage. Smith could barely enter the patrol car, his eyes closed, gasping for air. Martin drove to the Coos Bay Police Department, parked the vehicle with windows up, and left Smith inside while entering the station, the lawsuit alleges. Inside, Martin reportedly responded to a text about “snuggles,” stating, “I’m so ready for snuggles, I feel like I haven’t seen you in a week,” as reported by Oregon Live. The officer also allegedly watched TikTok videos for several minutes while Smith’s condition deteriorated.

Dashcam footage later revealed Smith unconscious, breathing irregularly with his head tilted back. Martin returned to the cruiser, administered Narcan, an overdose-reversal drug, and called an ambulance, according to state police investigators. Paramedics found Smith with a body temperature of 107 degrees and rushed him to Bay Area Hospital, where he died of cardiac arrest. The lawsuit cites his cause of death as “hyperthermia due to methamphetamine intoxication and probable exogenous contribution from wearing multiple layers of heavy clothing.”

Juan Chavez, the family’s attorney, emphasized the officers’ failure to act promptly. “When these officers found him, he was clearly showing signs of medical distress,” Chavez told KGW. “His temperature was 107. He was hyperthermic, and he was going to die. And unfortunately, he did.” Chavez noted a 40-minute delay in securing critical medical care for Smith, which proved fatal.

Kurt Smith, Nathan’s father, told The Oregonian that his son had been living at the Motel 6, and he had visited him just a week prior. Kurt learned of his son’s cause of death only through the funeral home, as police provided no details. “He didn’t deserve to just be left to die,” Kurt said.

No criminal charges have been filed against the officers involved. The lawsuit, filed on Wednesday, seeks unspecified damages for the family's loss, accusing the officers of ignoring clear signs of Smith's medical emergency. The case highlights concerns about police handling of individuals with mental health issues and substance use disorders, raising questions about accountability in such incidents.