

## 23 Year Old Man Commits Suicide with Chemicals Inside 2003 VW Bug

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A newer model, white VW Beetle was sealed off from public Monday as it was believed to contain hazardous chemicals as well as a body of a young man in his 20's.

Pasadena police and fire officials staged at Halstead (just behind the Best Buy shopping Center) 2:40 p.m. HazMat teams from Glendale were quickly called in.

The vehicle and man had been reported missing earlier. According to Lisa Derderian Fire Dept Public Information Officer and was in a corner of the parking lot behind Ethan Allen on Rosemead in Pasadena.

The windows to the car were rolled up and apparently locked. The temperature was about 100 degrees when officials arrived. There was allegedly a sign on the vehicle warning people of the potential danger.

“Hazardous chemicals, possible pesticides and possibly even a bomb.” Were involved one source told the Pasadena Independent. Area businesses were evacuated including Traders Joe's, Ethan Allen, and several computer research facilities in the immediate area.

The chemicals, although determined initially to be household, were enough to be considered a “serious threat” and possibly deadly in combination thereof.

Engine 37 from Pasadena established a staging area down wind for incoming units and contacted PPD to gather more information. Battalion 3 arrived on scene and established Halstead command. Upon further investigation and information gathered from PPD, it was determined that the LACO specialized haz-mat unit would be needed. The chemicals were unknown and the area including several businesses was evacuated as a precaution. The haz-mat team approached and evaluated the vehicle and surrounding area.

Erring on the side of caution, two Glendale fighters in highly protective gear with oxygen canisters on their backs carefully examined the car and took a few photos and examined the



A hazmat team responds to a chemical suicide near a Pasadena shopping center. (Terry Miller, Beacon Media News)

undercarriage. After about 10 minutes the firefighters returned to the command post to report their findings.

Many witnesses said they had seen the car there since 7 am. According to PIO Lisa Dederian there was a pre-printed Danger sign with a skull and crossbones pasted on the locked vehicle which added to the extreme precautionary measures taken by the fire and police dept.

It appeared that the Police and Fire dept. had a suicide on their hands with some serious complications and possible health hazard to the immediate community.

Approximately 70 fire personnel responded to this call.

Hazardous materials teams from the Glendale, Pasadena and Burbank fire departments and the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department arrived on scene and police cordoned off most of the parking lot.

An autopsy will be conducted to determine the actual cause of death.

After the fire dept checked the car, the bomb squad was called but later determined they were not needed. A detective and another firefighter later approached the vehicle, again with extreme caution but this time with no protective gear.

The 23 year old Male was declared dead at 4.23PM visually by the coroner. The man's family had reported the despondent 23 year old missing earlier that morning

It was moments after that, somehow a security guard for the center drove right up to the car in a golf cart unknowingly eluding the police perimeter lines and seemingly ignoring screams from officers in several different locations to "Get out of there".

Eventually after the security guard got out of his cart and looked the car over, he realized the police were screaming at him and he returned to the other side of the yellow tape. He had apparently found a gate open where no one had yet sealed off the area. Officers were immediately dispatched to that location behind Robins Ribs and sealed off that part of the lot. His excuse was that he always "finds people sleeping in cars"/or near cars in that corner of the lot.

People from all over the area were stranded for 5 hours while officials dealt with the unknown and a possible chemical explosion.

A Pasadena Police officer told the Weekly that Trader Joes was the first to be evacuated and the entire store, full of customers and staff evacuated calmly and exited with ten minutes. It was "perfect" said one officer, they just dropped everything and obeyed our orders and left without incident.

Media was gathering on land and in the air when wind of this tragedy found its way to their assignment desks. The roar of helicopters hovering above the scene could be heard for miles.

Haz Mat personnel smashed a window in the vehicle at around 6pm and opened the driver door. A strong smell of sulphur was whisked into the early evening air and the apparently dead body of the driver was visible.

Haz Mat crews continued to collect samples of the chemicals and analyse them on the spot. Eventually it was deemed safe for people to reclaim their cars and belongings around 7pm.

The individual was pronounced deceased at the scene given the visual signs at 04:23 pm.

At this point, samples were taken and the chemical make up was determined to be hazardous to humans and the environment. All notifications were made and a unified command was established with all responding agencies. At this point a haz-mat team from the Los Angeles County Coroners Office entered the vehicle, removed and decontaminated the body. The vehicle was decontaminated and all chemicals were removed by a private hazardous materials company.

The Pasadena fire department spent 6 hours on scene.

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