

SJ Teen Dies After Exposure To Hydrogen Sulfide

CBS-5

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San Jose, CA – A teenage boy who was found unconscious in his San Jose home Thursday morning and transported to Santa Clara Valley Medical Center's emergency room, triggering a hazardous materials lockdown of the facility, died Friday afternoon, according to the Santa Clara County medical examiner's office.

George Herrera, 18, was pronounced dead at 4:55 p.m. at the medical center where he had been unconscious and in critical condition since arriving for treatment on Thursday, the medical examiner's office said.

The cause of death has not been confirmed, though two pans containing hydrogen sulfide were found on a table in the teenager's bedroom, where he was found unconscious by his mother, according to San Jose Fire fire Capt. Barry Stallard.

Doctors will determine at the beginning of the week whether an autopsy should be performed, according to the medical examiner's office.

San Jose police had classified the incident as a possible attempted suicide, Officer Enrique Garcia said Friday morning. Investigators had not determined how the hydrogen sulfide ended up in the Herrera's room.

Fire and police crews who responded to the mother's 911 call around 8:45 a.m. complained of respiratory problems and reported a sulfur smell in the home at 3097 Yucca Ave.

Herrera, his mother, two firefighters and four police officers that had been exposed were taken to Valley Medical Center without being decontaminated, eventually causing hospital officials to close the emergency room under quarantine until about 3 p.m.

Source: <http://cbs5.com/local/herrera.hydrogen.sulfide.2.935521.html>

Hydrogen Sulfide Sickened Teen, Caused Hazmat Scare

KTVU

February 12, 2009

SAN JOSE, Calif. -- A San Jose fire captain said Thursday afternoon it was hydrogen sulfide that severely sickened a teenage boy and prompted the closure of Santa Clara Valley Medical Center's emergency room.

"It's a corrosive that affects your respiratory tract," fire Capt. Steve Alvarado said. "If you inhale it, it's not good."

The medical center was in the process of being reopened Thursday afternoon following an hours-long closure prompted by the arrival of the teen, who was taken to the emergency room around 8:45 a.m. after being exposed to what Alvarado now says was hydrogen sulfide.

At first, hospital officials and firefighters didn't know what had sickened the boy and thought he might have exposed employees and patients in the emergency room to the contaminant.

They quarantined the entire emergency department and began decontaminating those inside, a process that involved washing each person with soap and water and changing their clothes.

As of 1 p.m., health personnel had decontaminated about half of roughly 90 people who could have been exposed, county health and hospital spokeswoman Joy Alexiou said.

However, Alvarado said after fire officials had identified the cause of the teen's illness as hydrogen sulfide that it is highly unlikely he contaminated anyone else at the hospital.

"It affects the immediate area," Alvarado said. "Once you get out into the atmosphere, it really doesn't pose a threat."

Fire Capt. Barry Stallard concurred. "It's more of a confined-space gas," he said. "It dissipates very quickly."

The teen remained in critical condition this afternoon.

His mother, two firefighters and four police officers were also exposed and were taken to hospitals for treatment, Alvarado said.

Emergency crews had been called to a home at 3097 Yucca Ave. Thursday morning after the teen began reacting to the gas at a home there, Stallard said.

He was transported to the medical center without being decontaminated, which Stallard said was correct protocol based on the information emergency crews had at the time, but which caused the emergency room scare.

Police blocked off Foxworthy and Meridian avenues near the home on Yucca Avenue, and five other households were evacuated.

Alvarado said the source of the hydrogen sulfide is still under investigation.

"The other parts of the puzzle are going to be filled in by family members," he said.

The scare created quite a scene at the medical center this morning. At about 11:30 a.m., hazardous materials workers dressed in full-body blue and green suits with oxygen tanks attached stood outside the emergency room.

Medical center officials diverted incoming ambulances to other emergency rooms in the region.

San Jose resident Carlos Pena was in the emergency department's waiting room this morning when the area was quarantined. He had accompanied his 59-year-old mother to the hospital because she wasn't feeling well.

Pena said his mother was one of those decontaminated and had to wait in line, shower off and change into scrubs. She was then transported to another hospital.

He said he was worried about her but glad the hospital took the extra precautions.

"It's better to be safe than sorry," he said.

Source: <http://www.ktvu.com/news/18701131/detail.html>