Man, 37, killed in police shooting

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FULL TEXT

VINELAND –A 37-year-old man was fatally shot during a confrontation with police outside a Center City home Saturday morning.

Vineland police officers responded at 11:22 a.m. after a caller reported a man was "acting suspiciously" on the front porch of a house on West Wood Street between the Boulevard and Fourth Street, Cumberland County Prosecutor Jennifer Webb-McRae said in a statement.

"An encounter between the officers and the subject lasted for several minutes ending with the subject being fatally shot," Webb-McRae said.

The prosecutor on Sunday identified the man as Rashaun Washington of West Industrial Boulevard in Bridgeton. Authorities did not say how many officers discharged their weapons and did not identify the officers who were involved in the incident, which occurred less than two blocks away from Vineland's police headquarters. They did not indicate if Washington had a weapon, but eyewitness videos posted on social media suggest he was unarmed. The prosecutor's office said it's leading the investigation in accordance with state attorney general guidelines for incidents involving use of force by police.

A video posted on Facebook by Tina Wainwright, apparently filmed shortly before the shooting, shows at least three officers facing a shirtless man who appears to be pacing back and forth on the ground while facing them and sometimes crouching. One of the officers is accompanied by a K-9 and at least one is holding a firearm during what appears to be a standoff.

Another video posted on Facebook by an eyewitness shows the moment when the gunfire occurs. The video shows the man starting to run in the direction of the police cars, and then as many as three gunshots ring out. The video then shows an intense, heated scene involving a crowd of onlookers and police as the man lies on the ground and a Vineland Emergency Medical Service ambulance arrives at the scene.

The last police-involved shooting in Vineland occurred in April 2016, when armed robbery suspect Richard Bard of Bridgeton was killed in an exchange of gunfire during a foot pursuit through Center City. An investigation by the Cumberland County Prosecutor's Office found the officer in that shooting acted lawfully.

An analysis last year by USA TODAY NETWORK New Jersey found that nearly all of the 58 people shot and killed by New Jersey police in the past decade died while attacking officers, with many committing "suicide by cop." In 79 percent of the fatal shootings, the suspect was reported to have brandished a gun or knife or used it to shoot at or attack responding officers.

The news organization's analysis was based on its review of previously unreleased "use-of-force" reports, which usually are filled out by officers and then forwarded to county prosecutors and the state Attorney General's Office for review.

Walter L. Hudson Sr., chairman of the Salem County-based National Awareness Alliance, said his organization would monitor the Vineland incident and needed more facts about what led to Washington's death.

"This horrific shooting of black and brown people, of overzealous police officers is a national issue," Hudson, a South Jersey activist who frequently speaks out against violent actions by law enforcement officers, said in a news release. "All while white men who shoot up churches, schools, movie theaters and businesses are taken into custody, without a shot fired."



The prosecutor's office asks anyone with information about the incident to contact Detective Joseph Lowry at 856-453-0486, ext. 11197.

Anyone who wants to share information anonymously may download CCPOTIP app for Android or iPhone devices; send a tip via text to 847411, using the keyword CCPOTIP in the message line; or submit a tip at the prosecutor's Facebook page or website.

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