

## FRESNO POLICE DEPARTMENT

# NEWS RELEASE

Friday, March 5, 2021

### Critical Incident Community De-Briefing Video

Today the Fresno Police Department is releasing body-worn camera (BWC) video and other materials relating to the death of Mr. Joseph Perez which occurred on May 10, 2017. This incident is a tragic loss of life under very sad circumstances. As the current Chief of the Fresno Police Department, Chief Paco Balderrama extends his heartfelt sympathies to the family of Joseph Perez on behalf of the Fresno Police Department.

Notably, the BWC video and other materials related to this incident were designated as confidential under a May 25, 2018 protective court order and were provided to the family on January 23, 2019 in the on-going federal civil litigation. When the issue of releasing the video was raised with former Fresno Police Chief Andy Hall in late July 2020, he was in favor of removing the confidentiality designation and releasing the video. Due to objections by American Ambulance to the release of the video, the federal court order releasing the video was delayed until today.

In the incident, Fresno Police officers passing by saw Mr. Perez walking in a busy roadway at Palm and Santa Fe. He showed signs of distress and was putting his own safety and the safety of others at risk. At the same time, Fresno County was receiving 9-1-1 calls from residents in the area concerned about Mr. Perez. The Fresno officers got Mr. Perez to sit on the sidewalk, however because he kept trying to go back out into the roadway, they handcuffed him for his own safety, and immediately called for an ambulance. Mr. Perez was agitated and struggled with officers and with the Fresno County Sheriff's deputies who arrived a short time later.

Despite all their attempts to calm him, Mr. Perez continued to struggle with law enforcement for more than 15 minutes. During that time Mr. Perez made multiple attempts to harm himself by grinding his head against the sidewalk. Officers and deputies, working together, took steps to protect him from injury including deputies placing a towel between his face and forehead and the sidewalk. When the ambulance crew finally arrived, they directed the officers and deputies in the manner of restraint for transport. Tragically, Mr. Perez became unresponsive and died later at the hospital. The Coroner determined the cause of death to be compressional asphyxia with a contributing factor of a toxic amount of methamphetamine in his system, 24 times the toxic level.

The full details of the incident are contained in the Critical Incident Community De-Briefing video.

**Media:** If you need any additional information, please email

[Robert.Beckwith@fresno.gov](mailto:Robert.Beckwith@fresno.gov)

Lieutenant Rob Beckwith  
Fresno Police Department  
Public Information Officer  
Office of the Chief of Police



Paco Balderrama  
Chief of Police