

Pelican Bay State Prison investigating inmate death as a homicide

October 20, 2020



Officials at Pelican Bay State Prison (PBSP) are investigating the death of inmate Joshua E. Kirtley, 42, as a homicide.

On Oct. 17, at approximately 12:30 p.m., prison staff discovered Kirtley unresponsive in his cell during a security check. Staff immediately responded, called 911 and began life-saving measures.

Kirtley was transported to PBSP's medical clinic where paramedics and medical staff continued medical aid. He was pronounced dead at 1:05 p.m.

Prison officials determined Kirtley's cellmate, Jesse A. Rippee, was on the recreation yard when Kirtley was found. They discovered Rippee had multiple injuries, including facial swelling, scratches and bruises. He was treated and released and then placed in segregated housing as the prison's Investigative Services Unit continues its investigation.

The Office of the Inspector General was notified.

According to PBSP, Kirtley was received on July 28, 2004, from Humboldt County. He was serving a life sentence with the possibility of parole for first-degree murder.

Rippee was received on Sept. 24, 2015, from Los Angeles County. He was sentenced to 10 years for first-degree burglary, a second-strike offense. While in prison, he was sentenced to an additional 15 years in 2017 for assault by a prisoner with a deadly weapon or force likely to cause great bodily injury.

PBSP, located in Del Norte County, houses more than 2,300 minimum-, medium-, and maximum-security inmates. The institution provides high school and college academic classes, career technical education, work assignments, self-help programs, arts-in-corrections, computer literacy and other rehabilitation programs that address substance use disorders, anger management and family relationships. The institution opened in 1989.

This is a developing story. Please check online at www.triplicate.com for further updates.