

Evidence reviewed by prosecutors indicated the death of 26-year-old Jean Descamps during a Milwaukie police transport was “a medical event only,” a prosecutor wrote in a memo.

Descamps died Dec. 12, 2023, after Providence Milwaukie Hospital staff requested police assistance in removing him from the hospital emergency department.

An emergency room doctor told police that Descamps did not need further medical treatment and was just “playing possum.” Less than two hours later, Descamps was dead.

Descamps died from a drug overdose and “contributing natural causes,” according to preliminary findings from an autopsy.

Early in the evening of Dec. 12, Clackamas County Sheriff’s deputies responded to a TriMet MAX station after a MAX operator said a man, later identified as Descamps, would not exit the train. Descamps was “covered in feces and moving slowly” and told deputies that he had used drugs and was in pain, according to the memo prepared by Multnomah County Deputy District Attorney Devin Franklin. An ambulance transported him to Providence Milwaukie Hospital.

Hospital staff later told officers that Descamps was a “chronic problem” in the emergency room.

On the night of his death, he was treated for existing injuries, infection and cold exposure, according to the prosecutor. Staff tried to discharge Descamps after they determined he didn’t need any more medical treatment, but he went from coherent and responsive to falling out of a wheelchair. Once he was returned to a bed, he became alert again. Hospital staff still gave him “a little” Narcan, a nasal spray of Naloxone opioid overdose reversal medication, in case of “mild opioid intoxication.” After he was given Narcan, a doctor said Descamps “continued to be alert” and could be discharged.

“Notably, the records do not include any indication that toxicology testing was completed, or even ordered,” the memo said.

Four hours after Descamps was taken to the hospital, a hospital security guard called for help forcing him to leave. Officers witnessed Descamps groaning and drooling, non-responsive, “and his occasional movements appeared involuntary.”

Descamps had warrants, but the Clackamas County Jail would not book him in his condition.

“Officers expressed concern that Descamps still needed medical treatment, but the staff’s responses were consistent: Descamps had no medical needs, he was ‘malinger,’ and he needed to be removed. An ED physician said Descamps was ‘playing possum’ and the officers should just drop him off at a bus stop. When an officer suggested Descamps could die, the physician said he was medically cleared and he was feigning his symptoms. Ultimately, the officers decided to transport Descamps to Unity Behavioral Health Center on a police hold given he could not care for his basic needs,” the memo said.

Descamps was handcuffed and wheeled to a patrol vehicle. Two officers with the Milwaukie Police Department left the hospital with Descamps at 10:49 p.m. and arrived at Unity approximately 12 minutes later. While the officers waited for Unity staff to come out with wheelchair, they watched Descamps through a window they had left open in the patrol car.

“After just a few moments, one of the officers said it was hard to tell if Descamps was breathing. When they could not confirm a pulse, the officers immediately removed Descamps from the vehicle, uncuffed him, and performed CPR until medical took over,” the memo said. Descamps was declared dead at 11:31 p.m.

The Multnomah County DDA’s memo declines to prosecute the officers who had custody of Descamps at the time of his death. Similar reviews are standard practice whenever someone dies in police custody. [Born-worn camera footage](#) from one of the Milwaukie officers who was part of the initial response and transport was reviewed by the prosecutor and made public by the police department earlier this week.

“At no point in that footage does Descamps meaningfully respond to what’s going on around him. The footage captures the officers’ concern and the hospital’s responses — and supports the conclusion that Descamps was only placed on a police hold and transported to Unity when it became clear that (the) hospital would not treat him any further,” the prosecutor wrote. “Finally, the BWC footage confirms there is no evidence that the officers acted with any degree of force while they interacted with Descamps, including while he was being transported to Unity.”