



ONEIDA COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

Grady M. Hartman
Sheriff

Daniel L. Hess
Chief Deputy



NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release – April 9, 2017

City of Rhinelander- The Oneida County Sheriff's Office is aware there are many questions in relation to the incident that occurred on April 7, 2017. In an effort to assist the community in understanding our actions, we would like to provide a detailed description of what occurred. At approximately 6:37 PM, the Oneida County Sheriff's Office Dispatch received a 911 call from a land line registered to 10 Sanns Street in the City of Rhinelander. The caller did not speak to the telecommunicator but the telecommunicator could hear there was someone on the line. The telecommunicator employed a technique used to assist victims who are not able to speak either due to injury or an emergency situation. The telecommunicator asked the caller to press buttons on the telephone in response to questions. The telecommunicator varied the amount of button presses used for each answer and attempted to verify information by repeating questions and asking the caller to verify the information using a different number of button pushes.

The telecommunicator began using this technique by asking the caller to press a button to indicate the caller was still on the phone. Once the caller verified they were still on the phone, the telecommunicator asked if the caller need an ambulance or police. The caller indicated they needed both. The telecommunicator asked a variety of questions to attempt to determine what the emergency was at the home. Continuing the use of this technique, the caller indicated that they had been shot and the shooter was still at the residence. The caller indicated they were not able to speak and the suspect was looking out the windows of the house. Due to this information, the Rhinelander Police Department requested that the Oneida County Special Response Team be paged. The Oneida County Special Response Team requested Langlade County Special Response Team and Marathon County Special Response Team be paged to assist.

The telecommunicator continued to ask the caller questions where the caller could answer yes or no as well as questions where the caller could choose from several answers by pressing a certain number of buttons. When asked, the caller indicated the home owner, was the shooter and suspect in the incident. The caller also indicated the caller was male. When asked the caller confirmed, they were someone we had listed as being at the residence in the past. When given a list of weapons in the home, the caller indicated that along with firearms and bows, there were explosives in the home. Due to this information, the Marathon/Oneida County Bomb Squad was paged to respond to the area.

As law enforcement created a perimeter around the suspect house, a neighbor approached a deputy and reported an eight or nine-year-old child lived at the residence. Sheriff's Office records confirmed this information. When asked about the child, the caller indicated the child had been shot in the legs. The caller at one time indicated to the telecommunicator that the child was deceased, but contradicted this information later in the call.

The caller stayed on the phone for 55 minutes with the telecommunicator, but the call ended abruptly. Due to the report by the caller, the homeowner was believed to be the suspect and this information was



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provided to law enforcement on the scene. Before further information could be obtained, the homeowner exited his home unexpectedly and he was detained by the Oneida County Special Response Team. The homeowner was transported to the hospital. While at the hospital, the homeowner indicated no one was in the house with him. The house was searched and it was confirmed the homeowner had been alone.

This call was very unique. It is unusual for a caller not to speak with dispatch when they call. The situation indicated by the caller through the use of the button pressing technique appeared probable and the caller's inability to speak validated the credibility of the call. We are aware that there was a very large presence of law enforcement resource in the area on Friday night, but this is the type of response needed if this situation had truly occurred. As soon as we determined that this was in fact only a medical issue, we deescalated quickly.

A review of the initial 911 call reveals that the telecommunicator who took the call acted in a professional manner to ensure the caller as well as the responding personnel were safe. Due to the fact the caller was responding to the telecommunicator and providing primarily consistent information, the telecommunicator had no way of knowing that the situation was not as it was being reported. Law enforcement must respond to what is reported until it can be proven otherwise.

Our primary responsibility is the safety of the community and the safety of our personnel. Our actions were in protection of the community and our personnel.

Captain Terri Hook can be contacted on Monday, April 10, 2017 with any questions in reference to this incident.

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