

K9 Officers Who Died in Hot Cars, 2012 to 2014

July 11, 2012 / Tucson, Arizona

Arizona Department of Public Safety drug-sniffing K9 Jeg, a 6-year-old Belgian Malinois, was rushed to a veterinary hospital after being left in a hot squad car for over an hour. Jeg's handler, Officer Korey Lankow, was in the process of switching vehicles and left Jeg unattended when he responded to an emergency call. Lankow realized on his way to the call that he had left Jeg in the other vehicle and returned as soon as he could. Jeg survived and was hospitalized overnight, with Lankow at his side, in the kennel, the entire time. The following day, the decision was made to euthanize Jeg.

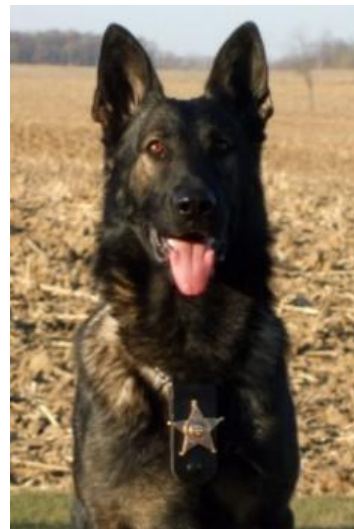


July 24, 2012 / Adkins, Texas

Bexar County Sheriff's Office K9 Officers Vegas and Hades, both Belgian Malinois, died from of apparent heat exhaustion after being left in a hot vehicle overnight by their handler. Sheriff's Deputy Steve Benoy had driven the dogs to his home in Adkins after work on Tuesday afternoon and later left town on an overnight trip without putting the dogs into their kennels. He returned on Wednesday to find the dogs dead inside the county-issued SUV. Benoy was put on administrative leave and an investigation was launched. In February 2014, a grand jury indicted Benoy on two misdemeanor charges of cruelty to animals.

August 1, 2012 / Celina, Ohio

Mercer County Sheriff's Office K9 Officer Zak was found dead of heat exhaustion after he was left in a hot patrol vehicle by his handler. Sheriff's Deputy Chad Fortkamp left Zak, who had a pre-existing heart condition, in the vehicle while he was at the office. Protocol was either to leave the car running with the air conditioning on or to take the dog inside the office. The car was not running that afternoon. Fortkamp was suspended without pay for 45 days, and the Sheriff's Office suspended the K9 program until further notice.



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August 9, 2012 / Camden, New Jersey

Camden Police Department K9 Officer Serge, an 18-month-old German shepherd who had been on duty for only three months, was found dead after he was left unattended in a patrol car for two hours. Reports indicate that although the cruiser had been left running with the air conditioning on, both the air conditioning and the temperature-monitoring heat-alert alarm system had failed.



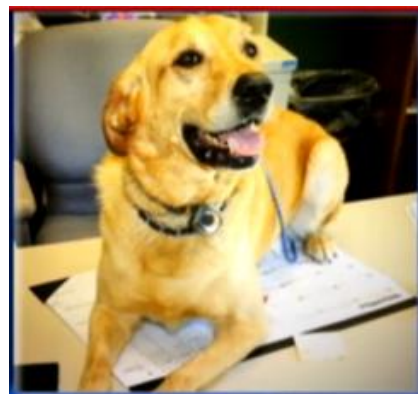
August 23, 2012 / Jackson County, Mississippi

Jackson County Sheriff's Department K9 Officer Chuck, a 4-year-old Belgian Malinois, died of heat exhaustion after being left unattended in a hot car. A deputy had left Chuck with the vehicle running and the air conditioning turned on while he went inside the station to fill out a report. When the deputy returned to the vehicle after a little more than an hour, it was no longer running, and Chuck was dead. An investigation later revealed that the power to the temperature-monitoring heat-alert system had been interrupted and the system rendered inoperable.



August 29, 2012 / Des Moines, Iowa

Des Moines Police Department K9 Officer Harley, a Labrador retriever, was found dead after he was left in a hot patrol vehicle by his handler, Officer Brian Mathis. Temperatures that day soared to nearly 100 degrees. Harley had been with the department for seven years.



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September 1, 2012 / Warwick, Georgia

Warwick Police Department K9 Officer Sasha, an 8-year-old German shepherd, died of heat exhaustion after being left unattended in her handler's vehicle for several days. Lieutenant Thomas Frye had left her in the SUV over the weekend and found her decomposing body as he headed to work on Monday. Sasha had previously worked as a K9 officer in Miami, where she had been retired because of her fear of thunder. The Animal Control Officer assigned to the investigation, upon seeing the interior of the vehicle where Sasha died, remarked, "It really makes me sick ... it makes me sick to my stomach." Sasha had clawed through parts of the seats, bitten through seatbelts, ripped off chunks of leather from the seats, and torn off the rear view mirror as she attempted to escape. After burying Sasha in his backyard, Lt. Frye resigned.



March or April, 2013 / Perry County, Mississippi

Perry County Sheriff's Office K9 Officer Napo, a 3-year-old Belgian Malinois, was found dead after he had been left in his handler's patrol car overnight. Handler Steve Verret had apparently forgotten that the dog was in the vehicle. A necropsy was not performed, and the story was only made public weeks later by a tipster who alerted local media. Verret was reassigned to another position.



June 7, 2013 / Aiken County, Georgia

Aiken County Sheriff's Office K9 Officer Cooper died after being left in a hot patrol vehicle. His handler, a special operations deputy, was demoted and placed on probation for six months, after which he resigned.

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June 17, 2013 / Pickens County, Georgia

Woodstock Police Department K9 Officer Spartacus, a 3-year-old Belgian Malinois, was found dead of heatstroke after he had been left unattended in his handler's patrol car. Officer Chad Berry was placed on administrative leave, suspended, and then removed from the K9 program.

August 13, 2013 / Bennettsville, South Carolina

Bennettsville Police Department K9 Officer Tank, a 4-year-old Labrador retriever, died after his handler left him unattended in a hot vehicle. When Officer Robert Miller came back and noticed Tank was in distress, he took him to a veterinarian, but Tank died of heatstroke the following morning. Miller was suspended without pay and then removed from the K9 program.

August 2013 / Harris County, Texas

A bomb-sniffing K9 officer with the Harris County Sheriff's Office died from heat exhaustion after being left in a hot patrol car.

April 9, 2014 / Buckeye, Arizona

Arizona Department of Corrections K9 Officer Ike, a 7-year-old Belgian Malinois, was found dead in the back of handler Jesse Dorantes' SUV at the Arizona State Prison Complex–Lewis. Ike had been left in the vehicle without food or water for approximately seven hours. During this time, the windows were rolled up, and the outside temperature reached approximately 98 degrees. A postmortem exam found that Ike had died of cardiac, pulmonary, and major organ failures caused by elevated body temperature. The Maricopa County attorney declined to prosecute Dorantes for cruelty to animals.



July 9, 2014 / Mills, Wyoming

Mills Police Department K9 Officer Nyx, a 10-year-old black Labrador retriever, was found dead in the back of handler Zachary Miller's patrol car at the police station. She had been left in the vehicle for more than six hours, with the doors locked, windows rolled up, and the air conditioning off. The outside temperature reached at least 86 degrees during that time. Miller was charged with cruelty to animals, to which he pleaded not guilty.



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August 9, 2014 / Barksdale Air Force Base, Louisiana

U.S. Air Force Security K9 Caro, a 7-year-old German shepherd, died of heatstroke when he was left in his handler's vehicle for about two hours on a day when temperature reached a high of 95 degrees. The unnamed handler, a member of the 2nd Security Forces Squadron, was found responsible through negligence for Caro's death.



August 20, 2014 / Duplin County, North Carolina

Duplin County Sheriff's Office K9 Officer Kela, a 9-year-old Belgian Malinois, was left in a hot patrol vehicle by her handler, Deputy Kevin Williams, for over 24 hours. She was found dead inside the vehicle by Williams' father-in-law after Williams had gone on vacation. The district attorney declined to prosecute Williams for Kela's death.



September 12, 2014 / Madisonville, Texas

Madisonville Police Department K9 Officer Baron, a Belgian Malinois, was found dead of heatstroke after he was left in handler Cpl. Gary Laws' patrol car for about four hours on a day when temperatures reached the low 90s. Following investigations by the Madisonville Police Department and the Texas Rangers, Laws was charged with misdemeanor cruelty to animals for Baron's death. Laws resigned from the Police Department.



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September 16, 2014 / Spartanburg County, South Carolina

Greenville-Spartanburg International Airport Police K9 Officer Emma, a 7-year-old black Labrador retriever, was found dead of heat exhaustion after she was left in handler Cpl. Chris Richau's vehicle for about 90 minutes. The car had been left running with the air conditioning turned on, but the air conditioning malfunctioned. The vehicle did not have any safety equipment installed to protect the dog or alert the handler to malfunctions or overheating.



September 28, 2014 / Montville Township, Ohio

Montville Police Department K9 Officer Beny, a 2-year-old German shepherd, was found dead of heatstroke after he was left in handler Sgt. Brett Harrison's patrol vehicle, which was parked in the police station parking lot, for about four hours. The engine was turned off and the windows were rolled up on a day when the temperature reached 79 degrees. Harrison was charged with misdemeanor cruelty to animals following an investigation of the incident.

