

# LAS CRUCES SUN-NEWS

## 911 delay linked to drilling accident death

By Jose L. Medina Sun-News reporter

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LAS CRUCES - Attempts to reach 911 following Tuesday's fatal industrial accident were unsuccessful as the calls were greeted by a recording, according to a police report.

Michael Kingsley died Wednesday morning, a day after being flown to Thomason Hospital in El Paso in critical condition.

Kingsley, 22, was working in an area off El Paseo Road where core samples were being collected with a drilling rig. According to police, about 3 p.m., Kingsley somehow became caught in the rig's auger.

The report states Kingsley's co-worker attempted to contact 911, but the call wouldn't connect. He then called Kingsley's father, who in turn called 911.

Attempts to reach the co-worker Wednesday were unsuccessful.

Hugo Costa, director of the Mesilla Valley Regional Dispatch Authority, the organization that handles 911 calls for all cities in the county, as well as areas outside city limits, said he could not make any determinations as to what happened, but that the calls would be researched.

Costa said recordings telling callers to hold are played when all lines are busy. That can happen because of several factors.

"It can happen at peak times of the day," he said. "Usually it happens when there are incidents that are very public.

For example, a motor vehicle accident ... we get multiple calls for that and they all come in at once. Every car that goes by will put a call in. When we have seven lines answering calls, all the calls come in and they'll backlog them so people won't hang up."

Costa said if a caller is placed on hold, the call will be answered in approximately 30 seconds to a minute. He called it a national trend of overburdened emergency dispatchers thanks in part to cell phone proliferation.

He added that a new system will be installed early next year that will be able to separate emergency from non-emergency calls.

Las Cruces police said Wednesday the accident investigation was ongoing.

According to the police report, the witness told officers he heard a loud sound at which point he saw Kingsley had become trapped and immediately shut off the machine.

The officer noted that Kingsley had at least one large injury to his leg. The core samples were being drilled by Precision Engineering Inc.

Tuesday's was the second fatal industrial accident in Las Cruces within the past month.

On Nov. 16, Jim Clark, 49, was killed while working with a machine that bales cardboard and paper at the South Central Solid Waste Transfer and Recycling Facility on West Amador Avenue.

The South Central Solid Waste Authority operates the transfer station on behalf on the city and Doña Ana County.

Police have said Clark was in the hopper of the baler, attempting to clear the jammed machine. It was unclear why the machine was re-started while Clark was inside.

As of late last week, the U.S. Occupational Safety Health Administration had yet to issue its findings of the Nov. 16 accident.

Police spokesman Dan Trujillo said OSHA investigators were called in for Tuesday's accident.