

Family of Diboll man who died in Nacogdoches jail custody seeking answers

By JESS HUFF/The Lufkin Daily News
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The family of a Diboll man who died while in the custody of the Nacogdoches County Jail is seeking answers about his death, according to a press release from Paul Anderson, the family's attorney.

Jose Loreda was convicted of felony driving while intoxicated and was awaiting transfer to the state prison system when he fell, according to earlier reporting by The Nacogdoches Daily Sentinel.

The Nacogdoches County Sheriff's Office said he fell while alone in his jail cell and was found with a broken neck on Oct. 3. Nacogdoches Memorial Hospital operated on him that evening, but he died on Nov. 18 after life support was removed.

"The family of Jose Loreda believe the Nacogdoches County Jail, its officers and officials should be held accountable for the trauma it inflicts on inmates, most especially those with mental health or substance abuse issues who continue to be held in jail without proper treatment," Anderson said.

"The family of Jose Loreda has notified the county of Nacogdoches, Texas, of its intent to sue, not just for the unnecessary death of their father, but to inform the public and lawmakers about civil rights violations, structural racism and the punitive attitudes underlying the treatment and medical neglect occurring inside the Nacogdoches County Jail."

Sheriff Jason Bridges does not believe inmates in the county jail are being treated inappropriately but said there is an investigation ongoing and it would reveal the facts of the matter.

"An investigation is being conducted, a real investigation — not allegations such as what may be being made by (the Loreda family's) attorney — a real investigation by an independent attorney, and those facts will be handed to the district attorney's office," he said.

✧ Anderson alleges that Loreda's family was not notified for several days after his surgery, that he was a quadriplegic and required ventilation and that the family was denied access to Loreda by sheriff's office deputies.

"Mr. Loreda went to the hospital, his son was contacted — he has other siblings. We did set it up for his family, which is not a normal procedure, to start visiting their father in the hospital," Bridges said.

It took about a week for the visitation to be made available, though Bridges wasn't entirely sure on the timeline for the visitation, he said. But a family member of Bridges was notified that day of the incident, he said.

† * "His family was able to visit him in the hospital, even his attorney was able to visit him at the hospital, and they did so on several occasions," Bridges said.

The family tasked Anderson with investigating the conditions and circumstances at the jail that caused the injuries leading to Loredo's death, Anderson states in his press release.

"The family is seeking medical records they believe will show their father was wrongly and inappropriately diagnosed with schizophrenia while in custody of the Nacogdoches County Jail, then prescribed a psychoactive drug that caused his injuries," the release states.

Bridges could not comment on the family's allegations regarding the medical diagnosis because it would violate HIPAA laws, he said.

Loredo's children also are asking for answers from the hospital about the surgery that resulted in Loredo's paralysis. They say in the release that they were not notified of Loredo's condition or given a chance to discuss his medical care.

"Anytime we have an in-custody death, the Texas Rangers come in and investigate that," Bridges said. "We do an internal investigation to see if any policies or procedures were violated within our agency.

"The Texas Rangers do a criminal investigation to see how the death occurred; that information is given to the district attorney's office to see if there was any negligence or criminal activity which led to his death."

The internal investigation showed no policy violations, he said. But the department will act appropriately if the Texas Rangers investigation does find wrongdoing, he said.

The department has various responses to situations based on evidence presented. Speaking generally, Bridges said a small offense including not showing up for work would result in a meeting with leadership, but a major violation including stealing from work could result in administrative leave while an investigation is conducted and possible termination.

"There are a whole slew of policy violations we have, from minor policy violations to major policy violations," he said.

He promised to remain transparent as the situation progresses and said he would not permit inmates to be treated wrongly in the county jail.

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