

*Sgt. D. Winslow/Initial scene and SW:

On 10-08-2009 at appx 1900hrs, I received a phone call from Dispatch advising that Patrol Lt. J. Parkison was requesting assistance from Criminal Investigations to respond to the Angel Valley Retreat. Dispatch advised that there were 4-5 persons that had "coded" from being in a sweat lodge at the retreat. There were at least 2 people deceased and another that was being flown out to Flagstaff. I asked to have someone at the scene give me a call so I could get a better understanding of what was going on and what might be needed. They advised that there was no cel phone service and it would be appx 10 minutes for someone to call. I asked that they get as much info as possible and that I would start getting personnel called out. Dispatch did call me back a few minutes later and advised that there were 2-3 persons deceased at the scene and at least 2 persons were at the hospital in Cottonwood. It was unknown how many had been flown out or were in transit.

Contact was made with available detectives and they were sent to the scene and the hospital for further information. Detective Wendy Parkison was en-route to the scene and I asked that she update me as soon as she arrived. Detective Pam Edgerton responded to Verde Valley Medical Center along with Detective Sgt. Tom Boelts and Det. Steve Surak. I responded to the scene along with Detective Mike Poling. Prior to my arrival I was contacted by Wendy via cel phone. She updated me and advised of what was initially being found. She stated she was going to start attempting interviews and gathering information of persons who were present or involved.

At appx 2030hrs I arrived and spoke with Lt. Jay Parkison and Deputy Joe Sutton who had been first at the location. We were near the sweat lodge and there were numerous deputies and other persons in the area. The sweat lodge had yellow crime scene tape surrounding it and the immediate area. I was advised that appx 60 persons had been in the sweat lodge. The persons involved were from a group of people that came to the retreat and were organized by a man named James Arthur Ray. They included his staff, helpers, and paying persons or clients. Most of the people who had been inside the sweat lodge were now up at the dining room where Wendy was gathering information and getting initial interviews.

James Ray had been brought back from the dining area and was sitting in the back of a Patrol unit. Two females were also present who were apparently part of the sweat lodge event as either staff or helpers to James Ray.

I was told that there were 2 deceased persons at the hospital in Cottonwood and 4 others that were critical had been flown to Flagstaff Medical Center and were being intubated. There were at least 6 others who had been transported by ground to VVMC and Sedona Medical Center. There were others who were complaining of sickness that were being attended to by medical personnel. Deputies were going door to door of the living areas and finding more participants that needed to be attended to.

I went up to the dining room and spoke with Wendy. She had a table set up in the corner and was interviewing persons that had been involved in the event. She had passed around a paper for all persons to list their contact information. There were numerous persons either eating or conversing within the dining area. There were some that were lying on areas of the floors and appeared to be in some distress.

I spoke with Verde Valley Fire Captain Mike Rauton who advised they were unsure what was causing the problems with the persons. He said they had run their hazmat team through the sweat lodge and found no toxic gases. He thought the cause appeared mostly to be from the extreme heat and lack of oxygen, while persons were inside the sweat lodge. At least one person had been transported with burns on his arm from falling into the hot rocks. They continued to find persons with problems and were transporting them to the available hospitals.

Contact was made with Amayra Hamilton in the dining hall. She and her husband Michael were the owners of the Angel Valley Retreat. She gave me a print out of the persons that had been involved in the event with staff and helpers highlighted. She advised that they had events from James Ray at the retreat in the past years and had not had a problem of this type. She was very helpful in assisting the participants, organizing the dining hall, and proactively getting food, water and any other needs.

Detective Poling had arrived and we briefed on the situation and known information. We were told that the participants paid nearly \$10,000 to be a part of this event called the "Spiritual Warrior". They participated in activities starting Tuesday during the day and ended after the sweat lodge portion. It appeared that they were put through an assortment of mental activities including a "Vision Quest" of appx 2 days where participants sat by themselves in the forest/desert with no food or water.

It appeared, from information gathered by YCSO personnel and others, that some participants had been inside the sweat lodge for nearly 2 hours. Hot rocks that were heated in a fire from outside the lodge were inserted from a door flap area and placed inside the center of the lodge. The flap would be closed and water was poured over the rocks to create steam. There was also some type of herb put on the rocks with the water. The participants stayed inside, sitting or lying, in a row of two circles from within. They apparently could leave after a cycle was completed and the flap was opened, but were persuaded to stay by James Ray and his staff so the full effect of the event was accomplished. Each cycle lasted anywhere from 15 to 30 minutes and there were at least 7 cycles. Participants also chanted and commented in persuasive manners to get other participants, who might be having problems and wanted to leave, to stay and complete the event. There were staff members inside the lodge and outside to assist with persons exiting.

During and especially at the end of the event, as participants left the lodge, they were found to be non-responsive, nauseous, unconscious and even possibly deceased. It was learned that there was concerns from and for participants inside that were possibly having real problems, but the cycle would not stop, at James Ray's request.

As participants exited, they were sprayed with water hoses from outside helpers and given water and other electrolyte type drinks to assist in their recovery.

During this event, when participants exited, there were many who could not walk or move and had to be dragged out. There were at least two that were found to be deceased or near death as they were dragged out of the back portion of the lodge after the sides had been pulled up. These two were eventually transported and were pronounced deceased at the hospital.

We were unsure if there had been some toxic substance added to the rocks, fire, or other but it was obvious that there were real issues with the amount of heat that the participants were exposed to and the lack of oxygen that was inside. We also learned that there had been a "Vision Quest" event that took place days prior to the sweat lodge. In the "Vision Quest", participants went out to a location in the forest on Tuesday night and were placed under a tree. They stayed there throughout the night, the following day, and through the next night. They were retrieved in the morning of the day of the sweat lodge and told to eat lightly and drink water.

Sgt. Boelts was asked to deal with the deceased while at the hospital and any initial interviews that might be needed. Detective Surak assisted and eventually arrived at Angel Valley to assist Wendy with interviews.

At appx 2240hrs Detective Poling and I attempted to speak with James Ray while he sat in the back of a patrol unit near the sweat lodge location. We wanted to know if anything was added that might have caused the deaths and illnesses. We had numerous other questions and asked if he would talk to us about the incident. He was cordial but stated that he had been advised by his lawyer to not speak with us. I asked again if he would at least tell us if there was anything that he knew of that might have been added to the rocks or anything else that might be causing the sickness or deaths. He again replied that he was advised not to make any comments. I asked if he would allow us to look into his room and he replied he would not. I told him that he was not going to be able to go back into his room at this time. VIP Dave Lamparter was stationed at the "Coyote" lodge, where James Ray was staying during the event, to safeguard any possible evidence or belongings.

I later passed James Ray as he was walking in front of the dining hall entrance and I made the comment to him, "Are you finally getting a chance to get something to eat?" He made a comment back that he doesn't eat that, gesturing towards the dining hall. I did not see him again during the night.

I was advised by Amayra Hamilton that some participants were wanting to leave by 0300hrs to catch flights. There was concern that they might miss their flights because of the delays. None had been told of the deaths and many were in the dark about why the interviews were being done. I advised all that were in the dining hall of the two deceased persons and the reasoning for the interviews. We attempted to get all persons contacted prior to their leaving for flights and allowed those that were to either go to bed or leave.

After the notification of the deaths a circle was made by persons and participants inside the dining hall and a type of prayer was performed for nearly 15 minutes.

A quick briefing was made in the YCSO Command Post vehicle by all detectives that were present. Areas were secured by VIPs and all left until the following morning when a search warrant was to be obtained by Detective Poling for a proper search of the areas.

At appx 0230hrs I spoke with a Sandy at the Flagstaff Medical Center in regards to any possible information on the subjects that were being treated. She advised that two were classified as "critical" and two were "serious". She had no information on any toxins that might have been found but stated it appeared to be from heat exposure.

On 10-09-2009 at appx 0835hrs I again arrived at the Angel Valley Retreat. Detectives and other personnel within Criminal Investigations were contacted and responded for assistance in the search warrant that was said to have been written and awaiting a judge's signature. At appx 1305hrs I was contacted by Detective Shonna Willingham and advised that she and Detective Poling had the signed warrant.

I went to the "Coyote" lodge near the dining hall with other detectives where a VIP was present and securing the inside. I took photographs of the outside and inside. I assisted in searching the inside areas and a smaller black suitcase that had been packed and left near the front entrance. There were numerous items of prescriptions, supplements, and vitamins in this suitcase. None of these items were taken although they were photographed and documented. (See SW Supplements for items taken) I photographed items that were taken or appeared of interest within the lodge and later had a CD made of the photos and placed into evidence. I also made a photo log and placed that with evidence to be entered with the CD at a later date.

At 1445hrs the lodge was secured and Angel Valley personnel were advised that the remaining items could be released to James Ray. Response was made back to the sweat lodge area where a search and collection on items was being planned. I left the retreat shortly after and completed my activity for the day.

At this time no further.

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