

Man Who Dies In Courtroom Committed Suicide

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News

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A man just convicted of a serious crime collapses in the courtroom and dies in front of the jury. It turns out, he was poisoned.



The Nodaway County jury had just convicted a Stanberry man of statutory sodomy.

Steven Parsons, 48, was looking at a lengthy prison term.

But before bailiffs could take him away, he collapsed at the defense table.

Several people in the courtroom, including Nodaway County Sheriff Darren White, had seen Parsons taking a drink from a glass at the defense table just minutes before.

"It hadn't been two minutes since he took the drink when he suddenly lurched back in his seat and began to have a seizure," White said.

Efforts to revive Parsons were unsuccessful. He died while being transported to Heartland Regional Medical Center in St. Joseph.

After looking at Parsons' body, the Coroner's Office says it was the most classic case of cyanide poisoning he'd ever seen. The sheriff thought he knew what had happened.

"With the talk that he may have done something to take his own life, we were really looking to see if he was researching anything on the internet," said White.

Search warrants of Parsons Tire, the company he owned, along with his home in Gentry County and his car outside the courthouse uncovered evidence Parsons had bought the cyanide himself. Parsons bonded out and was free during the trial. The car he had driven to court was parked outside.

Sheriff White says an out-of-state company confirmed Parsons purchased 100 grams of cyanide to be shipped overnight.

The death is now being considered a suicide.

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Sheriff White said he treated the case like any other investigation, even though it's not like anything he'd ever seen before.

"I started in law enforcement in 1985 and this was a first for me," he said. "I spoke with the judge, I spoke with all the attorneys, all of whom have years of experience in the courtroom. They also indicated it was a first for all of them."

While the sheriff is still waiting for an official autopsy result, he says it appears the case is closed.