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News



Murder Rocks Diamondville - An altercation between two Union Pacific employees leads to the murder of a Nebraska man at the Fairview Motel

Posted: Wednesday, May 19th, 2010
BY: Zach Zavoral, Gazette Editor

Small towns always enjoy a good amount of rumors, but last Wednesday's murder story was no rumor.

Paul Cook, a 39-year-old Union Pacific railroad worker from Bellevue, Neb., was beaten to death last Tuesday night, May 11, just before midnight at the Fairview Motel in Diamondville.

The Lincoln County Sheriff's office deemed it a homicide, marking South Lincoln County's first homicide since 2004. The last homicide in Lincoln County occurred in 2009.

Vincent James, a 36-year-old Union Pacific employee from Sanders, Ariz., has been arrested and booked at the Lincoln County Jail pending homicide charges.

According to the Fairview Motel manager, who requested his name be kept anonymous, nothing illegal or suspicious was taking place at 11 p.m. that night when the manager made his final perimeter checkout as he does every night.

At about 11:45 p.m., James was heard knocking on doors and eventually broke a window. His racket and noise lead to



Top left: the door of Room 44 at the Fairview Motel where the deadly altercation occurred. Above: Wyoming State Crime Scene Investigators take a deeper, scientific look in Room 44 two days after the incident. At left: Vincent James' mug shot prior to booking in the Lincoln County Jail. GAZETTE PHOTOS / Zach Zavoral, mug shot courtesy Lincoln County Sheriff's office.

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When the police arrived, they found James intoxicated and wandering on the motel premises. When they walked by James' motel room, they found the door open and saw an unconscious man and a semi-unconscious man lying on the motel room floor. The unconscious man, Cook, was declared dead at the scene with "obvious trauma to his head and face" obtained during an altercation inside the room.

The semi-unconscious man, a 33-year-old from Bluegap, Ariz., was taken to South Lincoln Medical Center and treated for wounds to the head before being interviewed by County detectives.

An autopsy on Cook is still pending.

When interviewed by County detectives, James apparently supplied a lot of details leading to his eventual booking.

"I would say interviewing he, himself, was the best source we had," Lincoln County Sheriff's Department Captain John Stetzenbach said.

According to the Sheriff's Office, an altercation occurred between the three men, though the Sheriff's office could not reveal who was mad at whom in the fight. That altercation, however, led to Cook's death and the beating of the third man.

The room itself has been severely damaged, as well as the Fairview's clean reputation.

"It's overwhelming," the manager said. "This has never happened to us in the entire (15-year) period we owned this motel. And when you bring in large groups of people from out of town and the Fair Housing Accommodation Act doesn't even allow me to make a decision who I'm gonna take and who I'm not gonna take. So the rooms are open to those who can afford to pay the price."

The manager asked that the public remain aware of the Fairview's excellent service and reputation. The business is a victim of the homicide as well.

"Business has suffered a lot as a result of the stigma that goes with (the crime)."

When asked for details on Cook and James, Union Pacific spokesman Mark Davis declined to comment.

"We respect their privacy," Davis said. "Really, the only thing we can say is that it is under investigation and our sympathies go out to the family."

According to Stetzenbach, the actual charges that will be made against James are still pending. However, the third man who was found semi-unconscious is not a suspect in the case and was released after questioning.

For the complete article see the 05-20-2010 issue.

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