



FOR PUBLIC RELEASE: Coroner Judgement of Inquiry and Inquest Inquisition and Recommendations

Department of Justice, Legal Services
Yukon Coroners Service
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Yukon Coroners Service: Judgement of Inquiry into the death of: Richard Peters, Jr.

Coroner Investigative File No.: 45202016023

Name: Richard Peters, Jr. Date of Birth: 1969/01/01 Date of Death: 2016/06/29
YYYY/MM/DD YYYY/MM/DD

Address: Whitehorse, Yukon
Street Address Province/Territory Postal Code

Ethnic Origin: First Nations Location of Death: Alaska Highway, Kilometer 1209

Cause of Death

(a) Blunt Force Traumatic Injuries (b) Ejection from Vehicle, No seat belt worn (c) Motor Vehicle Incident - Driver

Manner of Death

Accidental

Autopsy Findings

Examination of the body revealed multiple blunt force injuries. The arms and legs sustained multiple commuted fractures. There was significant head trauma, bleeding from the ears, and the presence of developing "raccoon eyes." The findings of bleeding from the ears combined with the presence of "raccoon eyes" indicates a high likelihood of skull fracture(s) and subsequent traumatic brain injury.

Toxicological Findings

Toxicology testing detected alcohol at .21% in the vitreous sample. A finding of .21% vitreous does not equate to .21% blood alcohol content. Assuming the alcohol consumed has fully equilibrated throughout the body, vitreous levels will be around 1.2 times higher than the blood. Assuming equilibration in this case, the blood alcohol level is estimated to be .18%.

Circumstances of Death

Richard Peters, Jr. was a 47 year old male living in Whitehorse, Yukon. On June 29, 2016 Mr. Peters, Jr. departed from his job at a mine near Dease Lake, British Columbia and was driving to Whitehorse. At approximately 18:40hrs, a southbound cyclist heard music coming from down an embankment. A search of the area located a male individual with no vital signs. Witnesses told investigators that a vehicle matching the description of the truck driven by the decedent had passed them going in the same direction approximately twenty minutes prior to the incident. The witnesses described the vehicle travelling at a high rate of speed, estimated at 140km-150km/hour. South of where the incident occurred, there was a rough section of highway where frost heaves, ruts and potholes had been previously patched. There was yellow highway caution signs with two additional orange high visibility caution flags, advising motorists of bumps/rough road conditions 500 meters ahead. There was additional warning signs indicating "caution loose gravel" and "reduce speed" as well as orange pylons on the shoulder adjacent to the rough section. Mr. Peters, Jr. crossed the center line of the highway and left the road on the west side. The vehicle rolled at least once and came to a rest twenty meters down the embankment. The vehicle came down the embankment with such speed and force that it impacted two large trees approximately 10-15 feet above the ground, leaving deep scarring and damage on the trees. Mr. Peters was not wearing a seat belt and was ejected from the vehicle, sustaining multiple blunt force trauma.

Significant Factors/Conclusions

The highway approximately 400 meters south of where this incident occurred was in poor repair and had frost heaves, potholes and loose gravel. There was highly visible warning signs and cones to warn motorists of the road conditions ahead and to reduce their speed and proceed with caution.

The investigation considered whether the road conditions may have caused Mr. Peters Jr. to lose control of his vehicle. There were no skid marks or other evidence which would suggest that the conditions of the road were a factor in this death. Travelling at the normal posted rate of speed did not cause any concerns regarding loss of control of a vehicle.

Excessive speed, failure to wear a seat belt, and alcohol consumption were significant factors in this death.

Recommendations

No recommendations

M Macdonald
Signature, Chief Coroner

Whitehorse, Yukon
Province/Territory

November 18/16
Date

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