



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: Robert William Blue

Coroner Investigative File No.: 45202013063

Name: <u>Robert William Blue</u>	Date of Birth: <u>1952/12/31</u> <small>YYYY/MM/DD</small>	Date of Death: <u>2014/02/15</u> <small>YYYY/MM/DD</small>
Address: <u>Calgary, Alberta</u> <small>Street Address</small>	<u>Province/Territory</u>	<u>Postal Code</u>
Ethnic Origin: <u>Caucasian</u>	Location of Death: <u>KM 997 Alaska Highway</u>	

Cause of Death

Multiple Blunt Force Injuries due to Motor Vehicle Incident – Driver of Transport Truck.

Manner of Death

Accidental

Autopsy Findings

An autopsy was performed at Vancouver General Hospital on February 21, 2014 at 09:00hrs. The autopsy revealed multiple blunt force traumas, which was consistent with the scene investigation.

The multiple blunt force injuries would have likely proved rapidly fatal, though the possibility of a contribution to death by crush asphyxia cannot be discounted.

There was no evidence to suggest that Mr. Blue would have been incapacitated in any way of natural disease prior to the impact; or that natural disease would have significantly contributed to his death.

Toxicological Findings

The toxicological analysis determined that there was no alcohol or illicit drugs present. Estimates indicated levels of metformin (anti-diabetic agent) and paroxetine (anti-depressant). An estimated subtherapeutic level of salicylates (anti-inflammatory medication) was also detected.

Circumstances of Death

On February 15, 2014 at approximately 03:45hrs, a semi-trailer unit driven by Robert William Blue rear-ended a parked semi-trailer unit on the Alaska Highway, near kilometer 997 west of the community of Watson Lake. Mr. Blue died from Multiple Blunt Force Injuries as a result of the collision. Mr. Blue was driving a semi-truck and trailer and was heading from Whitehorse back to Edmonton at the time of the incident. Another transport truck and trailer had broken down along the highway and was parked on the shoulder of the highway, facing east. A mechanic was dispatched from Watson Lake and had pulled alongside the broken down vehicle, in the east bound lane facing west. The mechanic's vehicle was parked blocking the east bound lane, with its headlights shining into the oncoming traffic. The trailer of the disabled transport truck did not have its lights illuminated. There were cones put out behind the disabled truck and trailer to warn oncoming traffic of the disabled vehicle, but not necessarily that the entire lane was blocked off up ahead. Mr. Blue came across headlights from the mechanic's vehicle, shining directly into his east bound lane. He applied the brakes and took evasive action, steering to the right and into the back of the disabled transport truck. Collision analysis determined that Mr. Blue was traveling at a rate of speed of 98km/hour-104km/hour. The posted speed is 100km/hour. A mechanical inspection found no indication that brake failure contributed to or was a cause of the accident. Mr. Blue was not wearing a seatbelt and the air bag did not deploy.

Significant Factors/Conclusions

The truck Mr. Blue was driving was in good mechanical condition. The driver seatbelt was functional, but not worn and the air bag did not deploy. It is unknown whether or not the use of these safety features would have mitigated the injuries sustained by Mr. Blue.

High visibility cones were placed behind the broken down semi-truck to alert drivers, but were not effective to warn drivers that the lane ahead was blocked. There were no lights illuminated on the disabled trailer parked on the shoulder of the highway.

The position of the mechanic's vehicle created a dangerous situation. To avoid headlights shining directly into his lane, Mr. Blue took evasive action by steering to the right. This caused his truck to impact the disabled vehicle trailer parked on the shoulder and resulted in catastrophic damage to the cab of Mr. Blue's truck and blunt force injuries incompatible with life.

Recommendations

No recommendations

MacDonald

Signature, Chief Coroner

Yukon

Province/Territory

Sept 19/16

Date

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