
NEWS RELEASE

Roberto A. Villaseñor
Chief of Police

Contact: Chris Widmer
Sergeant / Public Information Office
520-791-4852
On-call PIO: tucsonpdpio@gmail.com
<http://cms3.tucsonaz.gov/police>

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BURGLARY / OFFICER INVOLVED SHOOTING 445 SOUTH TOOLE AVENUE

On February 7, 2013 at about 12:24 a.m., a Union Pacific Railroad Police Officer transmitted on a Tucson Police frequency and asked for assistance regarding a possible burglary in progress. The officer advised that two males were making entry into a fenced area and attempting to remove property from a Union Pacific commercial yard located at 445 South Toole Avenue. Officers from Operations Division Downtown responded to assist. The first officer to arrive on scene was Jerald Knepper, a 9-year veteran of the Tucson Police Department. He located the two suspects walking east in the 900 block of East Mill Street. As Officer Knepper initially confronted the suspects, he fired one round from his duty weapon in the direction of the suspects. Both suspects complied with the officer's orders to get onto the ground and were detained with assistance from the Union Pacific Railroad Officers. The round did not strike either suspect and no one was injured during the incident.

Personnel from the Tucson Police Homicide Unit, Night Detectives Unit, Major Theft Offenders Unit and the Office of Internal Affairs responded to continue the investigation. They determined that two Union Pacific Railroad Police Officers were in the area of 445 South Toole Avenue when they observed two males enter the fenced commercial yard through a torn piece of fence and begin to roll a spool of coppering wiring back towards the opening in the fence. As this was occurring, one of the Union Pacific Railroad Officers contacted Tucson Police to assist via handheld radio. The suspects left the copper wire inside the fenced area and began walking away from the commercial yard. As the Union Pacific Railroad Officers were attempting to catch up to the suspects, Officer Knepper spotted them, exited his patrol vehicle and began giving verbal orders to show their hands. The suspects did not immediately comply and one of the suspects became verbally confrontational with the officer. The other suspect was facing away from Officer Knepper and turned towards the officer brandishing a silver object. Officer Knepper, initially believing the object was a firearm, fired one shot from his service weapon towards the suspect. As the suspect brought the object higher, Officer Knepper was able to determine the object was not a gun and did not fire any more rounds. Both subjects complied with the officer's orders to get onto the ground and both were detained with assistance of the Union Pacific Railroad Police. The round did not strike either suspect and no one was injured during the incident. The object in the suspect's hand was determined to be a silver colored flashlight.

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The Homicide Unit will continue the criminal investigation into Officer Kneppers actions. The Office of Internal Affairs will conduct a separate and parallel administrative investigation, examining the actions of department personnel in response to this incident. This type of post-shooting administrative review is standard protocol when an officer discharges their weapon in the line of duty, and is utilized to determine whether department policies were followed, and if current training, equipment, supervision, and policies are adequate and appropriate.

In addition, the Tucson Police Department Major Theft Offenders Unit conducted further investigation into the suspect's involvement in entering the commercial yard and moving the spool of copper wire towards the open area of fence. They determined that both suspects arrived in a vehicle together with the intention of entering the commercial yard and stealing copper wire. Both suspects entered the yard and began to remove items from the property. As the males got the property back to the opening in the fence, they were startled by a passing train and left the property behind. Detectives obtained a search warrant for the suspect's residences and located stolen items taken from a burglary of the same business on February 4, 2013. The two suspects were identified as 42-year old Chauncey Vasquez and 40-year old Robert Russell. Both were booked into Pima County Jail for 2 counts each of 3rd Degree Burglary. Mr. Vasquez was also charged with Unlawful Possession of a Dangerous Drug and Unlawful Possession of Narcotic Paraphernalia.



Chauncey Vasquez



Robert Russell

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