



# ARVADA POLICE DEPARTMENT

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## PRESS RELEASE

August 16, 2023

### **Arvada Police Department Official Statement Related to Delara-Thompson Lawsuit Filing**

On August 17, 2021, Arvada police were called to the Target store at 5071 Kipling Street. Witnesses reported a woman had used a switchblade knife to threaten an employee during the course of a shoplifting incident. The suspect's threats to the employee escalated the crime from shoplifting to robbery. One of the witnesses followed the suspect to the American Motel located near I-70 and Kipling and reported to police that the suspect went into the motel.

Within minutes, Arvada police officers arrived at the motel. The witness, who had reported that the suspect was a white or hispanic woman wearing a white tank top and black pants, then reported that the suspect was possibly about to leave the motel. Shortly thereafter, Ms. Destinee Delara-Thompson was observed leaving the motel. She was wearing a white tank top and black pants. Because she fit the description of the robbery suspect, Arvada police had reason to believe she was involved, so they contacted her and asked her for identification. Ms. Delara-Thompson said she did not have identification with her, announced that she was not the person the police were looking for, and quickly left the motel for the parking lot. Officers followed her.

At about the same time, officers in the main lobby of the motel saw Ms. Delara-Thompson moving past the lobby doors. Shortly thereafter, plainclothes officers who had also responded to the motel realized she was running toward a van in the parking lot. The van was parked facing a curb and between two other cars. As Ms. Delara-Thompson got in the van, the plainclothes officers parked an unmarked vehicle behind the van in order to prevent her from driving away.

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Trying to de-escalate the situation, a plainclothes officer spoke with Ms. Delara-Thompson through her driver's side window. He identified himself as a police officer and told her they wished to speak with her. She said she was not the person police were looking for. At the same time, the uniformed officers who had observed Ms. Delara-Thompson from the main motel lobby just moments before arrived at the passenger side of the van, so that there were several uniformed and plainclothes officers at the vehicle. The uniformed officers on the passenger side knew that plainclothes officers were on the driver's side of the van trying to contact the suspect.

Ms. Delara-Thompson, who was later discovered to have felony arrest warrants (one for a probation violation stemming from an earlier conviction for 2nd degree assault on a peace officer and 3rd degree assault, and the other for dangerous drugs), unexpectedly put the van in reverse and turned the van's wheels, causing it to swing toward the left where the plainclothes officers were standing. She quickly backed out of the parking space, hitting the police vehicle parked behind her. The uniformed officers were concerned for the safety of the plainclothes officers on the driver's side of the van. One of them thought her dangerous driving behavior posed an imminent threat to the officers on the driver's side, so he drew his duty weapon.

Ms. Delara-Thompson then placed the van in drive and rapidly accelerated forward, jumping the curb. Believing the suspect had hit or run over a plainclothes officer on the drivers side of the vehicle and that the suspect was continuing to pose a deadly threat, the officer, who was on the opposite side of the vehicle, fired at the suspect vehicle. Ms. Delara-Thompson was hit once by the officer's gunfire; she was pronounced dead at the scene. An autopsy determined that the gunshot was the cause of her death; it also showed she tested positive for methamphetamine, fentanyl, morphine, and amphetamine.

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The First Judicial District's Critical Incident Response Team (CIRT) conducted an independent investigation of the shooting. The District Attorney's office determined that due to the threat Ms. Delara-Thompson's van posed to officers, the shooting was justified. District Attorney Alexis King's determination and summary of the CIRT team's report may be accessed by contacting the First Judicial District Attorney's Office. For copies of the reports or any other related documentation from the Arvada Police Department, please visit [www.arvadaco.gov/850/Records-and-Reporting](http://www.arvadaco.gov/850/Records-and-Reporting)

Police later identified another suspect who was responsible for the robbery at the Target store. This suspect later pled guilty to committing that robbery.

Ms. Delara-Thompson's criminal history also included resisting/obstruction, possession of an illegal weapon, DUI, and other traffic offenses.

The Arvada Police Department was responding to a robbery, not shoplifting. The officers had reasonable suspicion to believe that Ms. Delara Thompson may be involved in the robbery, and they were justified in contacting her during the investigation of a felony offense. Ms. Delara Thompson unfortunately chose to engage in conduct that the officer reasonably believed posed an imminent threat to the life of another officer. Therefore, he chose to use deadly force to stop that threat.

The Arvada Police Department takes seriously its obligation to resolve civil disputes in the courts rather than in the media. While it is unfortunate that this incident has been mis-characterized by plaintiff's counsel, the Arvada Police Department will vigorously defend the case in court.

**XXX**