



Court battle brews over man's death while in Lahaina jail cell

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Were a Maui man's civil rights violated when he died in a Lahaina jail cell in 2008?

[D]ennis Werek died from alcohol withdrawal while he was in police custody.

The civil rights violation trial is a few months away.

Dennis "Castaway" Werek was an alcoholic. He was arrested in late September 2008 for terroristic threatening.

"Someone who was at high risk of fatal alcohol withdrawal, which is a very serious problem in jails and prisons. And if you are not trained on how to properly screen someone like that and how to monitor someone like that, then they can end up dead," said Werek's attorney Erik Heipt.

Heipt says Werek was dead for 27 hours before he was discovered.

He says Maui County is at fault because it uses cameras to monitor detainees and didn't train personnel correctly.

"From 1993 to 2008 we had over 27,000 people who have been housed at the Lahaina Police Station. It just doesn't jive with plaintiffs arguments that we have some defective system when you have that many people coming through, no serious injuries as a result of lack of medical treatment, and no deaths," said Maui County attorney Moana Lutey.

That's why Lutey has asked Judge Micheal Seabright to throw out the charges.

"Mr. Werek did have a cell mate in there with him at the time of death, and that person didn't even perceive him as dead," Lutey says.

"We have federal claims and we have state claims. At most he could dismiss the federal claims, but this case is going forward to a jury no matter what," Heipt says.

The ruling on that motion is expected in the next two to three weeks.

That trial is expected to being in early December.