

Deputy shoots and kills unarmed homeless man, prompting investigation

 latimes.com/local/lanow/la-me-ln-castic-deputy-shooting-20160803-snap-story.html

By Richard Winton and Hailey Branson-Potts

A Los Angeles County sheriff's deputy fatally shot an unarmed homeless man Tuesday night in Castaic after deputies tried to stop and question the man, authorities said.

William Bowers, 51, was riding a bicycle about 9 p.m. in the 31500 block of Castaic Road when deputies tried to stop him, according to sheriff's Lt. Joe Mendoza.

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Bowers dumped the bicycle and fled on foot from the deputies.

A deputy opened fire, striking him once in the upper torso. Bowers died at the scene.

Mendoza said Wednesday afternoon that investigators were still waiting to obtain the deputy's explanation for why deadly force was used during the encounter.

"We don't know why the deputy did what he did at this point because he has yet to be interviewed," Mendoza told The Times. "No weapons were recovered at the shooting scene."

Detectives, however, have interviewed several witnesses and most said Bowers had his hands near his waistband, according to Mendoza. Movement toward a waistband is often cited by police officers as a sign that person is reaching for a gun.

"We have a witness who says the man's arms were at his sides. We have other witnesses who say his hands were in front of his waistband," Mendoza said. "The deputy had the best view."

Deputies initially tried to detain Bowers because they recognized him from previous interactions and knew he was on probation for a narcotics conviction, detectives said.

One witness told KTLA-TV Channel 5 that the man was running from deputies when he was shot.

"He jumped off his bike and started running, and the cop shot him," the man told the news station.

Mendoza said that as part of their investigation, detectives are retrieving security camera footage from nearby buildings that may have captured some of the incident. The identity of the deputy involved in the shooting has not been publicly released.

The shooting, like all uses of potentially deadly force by deputies, is under investigation by the sheriff's homicide and internal affairs bureaus, as well as the Los Angeles County district attorney's office.

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UPDATES:

8:10 p.m.: This article was updated with additional details on the circumstances of the shooting.

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