

In-Custody Death of Aaron Caldwell

Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department

Deputy Rodrigo Acevedo, #655208

Deputy Richard Parham, #658321

J.S.I.D. File #25-0004



NATHAN J. HOCHMAN

District Attorney

Justice System Integrity Division

June 15, 2026

MEMORANDUM

TO: CAPTAIN ARTURO R. SPENCER
Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department
Homicide Bureau
1 Cupania Circle
Monterey Park, California 91755

FROM: JUSTICE SYSTEM INTEGRITY DIVISION
Los Angeles County District Attorney's Office

SUBJECT: In-Custody Death of Aaron Caldwell
J.S.I.D. File #25-0004
L.A.S.D. File #024-23084-1327-144

DATE: June 15, 2026

The Justice System Integrity Division of the Los Angeles County District Attorney's Office (LADA) has completed its review of the December 24, 2024, in-custody death of Aaron Caldwell involving Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department (LASD) Deputies Rodrigo Acevedo and Richard Parham. We conclude the force used by Acevedo and Parham was reasonable and not the cause of Caldwell's death.

The LADA Command Center was notified of this in-custody death on December 24, 2024, at approximately 2:27 p.m. The District Attorney Response Team responded to the scene and was given a briefing and walk-through by LASD Lieutenant Mike Modica.

The following analysis is based on investigative reports and other materials, including recorded interviews, photographs, video recordings, body worn camera video (BWV), and the autopsy report submitted to this office by Detective Jason Marx of LASD's Homicide Bureau on July 16, 2025. Voluntary statements of LASD personnel were considered in this analysis.¹

FACTUAL ANALYSIS

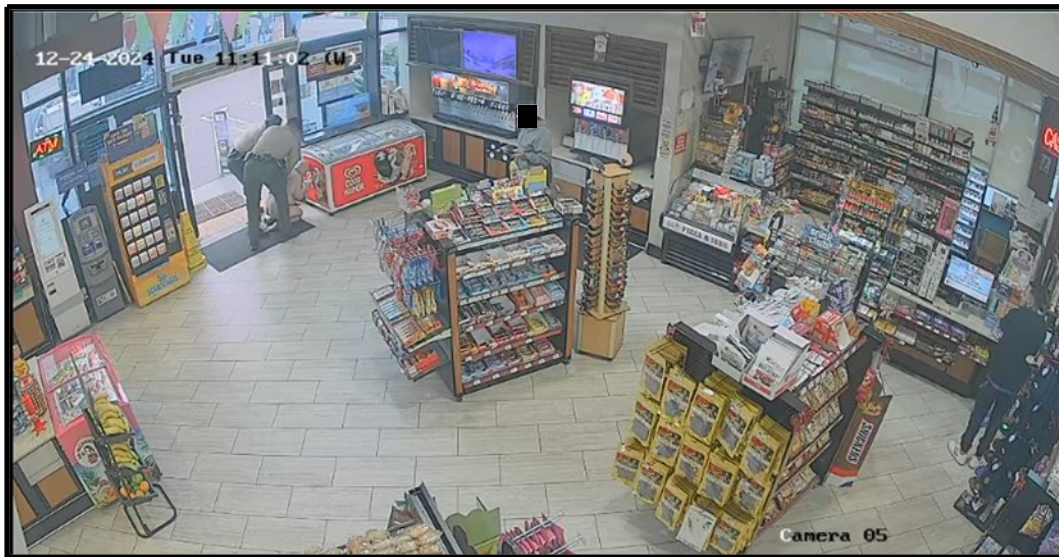
On December 24, 2024, at approximately 10:50 a.m., LASD Patrol Deputies Acevedo and Parham responded to the Exclusivo Inn & Suites, in the City of Lakewood, for a disturbing the peace call involving a naked man washing himself with a water hose. Upon arrival, deputies were informed the man had walked next door to the Chevron Gas Station. When deputies arrived at the Chevron Gas Station, the nude man, subsequently identified as Aaron Caldwell, was lying supine on the gas station parking lot near the entrance of the convenience store.

Prior to the deputies' arrival at the gas station, Caldwell was kneeling by a fuel pump, in front of a window washing station, sweating, breathing hard, and speaking incoherently. The Chevron attendant, [REDACTED], filmed Caldwell on his cell phone. Caldwell then started chasing [REDACTED] towards the convenience store. As Caldwell tried to enter the store, [REDACTED] attempted to

¹ All statements considered in this analysis were recorded.

shut the door and block him from entering. [REDACTED] had his arms wrapped around Caldwell, but Caldwell was too strong and heavy. [REDACTED] released his grip on Caldwell. Caldwell fell onto his back and hit his head, still breathing hard, speaking incoherently, and lying supine for several minutes until deputies arrived.

Caldwell provided deputies with his name and date of birth and indicated he needed medical assistance. Deputies radioed for assistance. Caldwell then sat up, crawled into the convenience store, and grabbed a pint of ice cream from the cooler located by the entrance. Deputies attempted to handcuff Caldwell, who was on his knees eating ice cream.



Security Camera Still Depicting Caldwell (upper left) at the Time of his Arrest.

Deputies had difficulty handcuffing Caldwell due to his size and passive resistance. As deputies attempted to gain control over both Caldwell's arms to handcuff him, Caldwell fell forward from his knees, striking the front of his head on the doorway and falling to the ground. Deputies were then able to obtain control over Caldwell's arms and handcuffed him with two sets of handcuffs.

As deputies were communicating with Caldwell to remain calm, he continued to move his body. Acevedo placed his knee on Caldwell's left buttock, however, Caldwell continued to move. Approximately ten to 15 seconds later, Caldwell stopped moving and began turning blue. Within seconds, Caldwell was placed onto his left side in the recovery position. Parham administered Narcan, a medication used to reverse/reduce the effects of opioids, to Caldwell. Narcan had no effect. Caldwell was then uncuffed and placed on his back. Deputies immediately performed chest compressions until the fire department arrived. Caldwell was pronounced deceased on scene at 11:45 a.m.

Statement of MD [REDACTED]

On December 24, 2024, investigators interviewed [REDACTED], the live-in manager at the Exclusivo Inn & Suites. At the time of the incident, Caldwell was staying at the motel. When [REDACTED] observed Caldwell watering himself with a hose, he grabbed the hose from Caldwell. Caldwell then aggressively approached [REDACTED]. [REDACTED] told Caldwell to

calm down. [REDACTED]'s wife called 9-1-1. Caldwell fell onto the ground and remained on the ground for several minutes before walking to Carson Street.

Search of Caldwell's Motel Room

Investigators found no narcotics or contraband inside Caldwell's motel room.

Statement of [REDACTED]

Caldwell's father, [REDACTED], stated his son had been diagnosed as a paranoid schizophrenic and had not been taking his medication. Caldwell had been placed on 5150 holds² on several occasions. On one previous occasion, it took eight deputies to handcuff him.

Caldwell's Arrest the Day Before the ICD

On December 23, 2024, at approximately 7:00 a.m., Caldwell was standing next to a liquor store in the City of Lakewood, 0.1 mile from the Exclusivo Inn & Suites. Caldwell was naked from his waist down, changing his clothes. When LASD Deputies Seth Burgess and Geovany Gutierrez contacted Caldwell, Caldwell had an odor of alcohol emitting from his person. Caldwell stated he had washed his clothes with alcohol. Caldwell exhibited symptoms consistent with being under the influence of alcohol. On December 24, 2024, at 5:04 a.m., Caldwell was cited and released from the Lakewood Station Jail.

Autopsy Report

On December 27, 2024, Deputy Medical Examiner Dr. Edwin Partovi performed an autopsy on Caldwell. Partovi observed contusions to the back and to the right temple of Caldwell's head. He determined these contusions were inconsequential to his death. Toxicology results show presence of methamphetamine. Partovi determined the cause of death to be "acute methamphetamine intoxication," and the manner of death to be accidental.

LEGAL ANALYSIS

Under California law, peace officers are permitted to use reasonable force in the performance of their duties, including the use of less-lethal options, when responding to individuals who pose a threat to themselves or others. Pursuant to Penal Code section 835a, an officer is justified in using force when the officer reasonably believes it is necessary to protect human life or prevent serious bodily injury.

In this case, responding deputies were lawfully present at the Exclusivo Inn & Suites and the Chevron Gas Station to investigate a disturbing the peace call involving a naked man acting aggressively. Upon arrival at the Chevron Gas Station, deputies located Caldwell, lying supine on the ground. Once Caldwell crawled into the convenience store and started eating ice cream he had not purchased, deputies attempted to handcuff him. Acevedo and Parham used minimal force by grabbing both of Caldwell's arms in order to handcuff him. After Caldwell was

² A 5150 hold refers to Welfare and Institutions Code section 5150, which allows an involuntary 72-hour psychiatric detention for individuals deemed dangerous or unable to care for themselves due to mental illness.

handcuffed, he continued to move his body despite orders to remain calm and to stop moving. Acevedo also used minimal force by placing his knee on Caldwell's left buttocks in an effort to stop Caldwell from moving. Once Caldwell started to turn blue, deputies responded immediately to render life-saving measures.

The use of force in this case was objectively reasonable and legally justified.

CONCLUSION

Based upon the evidence in this case, we find Acevedo's and Parham's use of force was reasonable. We further find said use of force was not a cause of Caldwell's death.