

**BREAKING NEWS** Man stabbed to death in Kings County, deputies investigating

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# Fresno police sergeant charged with stealing drugs, using them, crashing patrol car while DUI

By [Corin Hoggard](#)

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A Fresno police sergeant is charged with stealing meth from a suspect, using the drugs, and then driving his patrol car while under the influence.

FRESNO, Calif. (KFSN) -- A Fresno police sergeant is charged with stealing meth from a suspect, using the drugs, and then driving his patrol car while under the influence.

Donnie Dinnell is a 19-year veteran of the Fresno Police Department now charged with robbery, illegal possession of meth, and DUI.

The investigation started with a one-car crash in a parking lot, and Dinnell hasn't come back to work since.

Sgt. Dinnell's last day on duty at the Fresno Police Department ended with a wild ride near Herndon Ave. and Highway 99 in northwest Fresno.

"A 911 came into our dispatch center and said that a police car was driving erratically in the parking lot," said Fresno Police Chief Paco Balderrama. "The police car was described as running over curbs and striking a tree, disabling the police car."

Officers thought he had a heart attack but then realized his last call involved drugs.

They suspected fentanyl exposure and gave him Narcan, the opioid overdose rescue drug.

Chief Paco Balderrama says once officers knew Dinnell would survive, they started investigating.

Dinnell had closed that last call as "unfounded," but he had a bindle of drugs in his patrol car. Testing found the bindle contained methamphetamine and fentanyl.

Dinnell admitted taking them from a woman.

She told investigators he offered her a deal: Give him the drugs and he'd let it go.

Dinnell got the drugs.

He told investigators he planned to get rid of them after using a portapotty on a bridge under construction at Riverside and Veterans Boulevard.

But he drifted out of consciousness.

And then the crash.

Blood testing at the hospital showed he had meth and fentanyl in his system.

A toxicologist told police Dinnell had ingested way too much fentanyl for it to be anything other than intentional use.

The district attorney's office filed three charges against Dinnell on Wednesday.

"I anticipate that Sgt. Dinnell will be hopefully turning himself in and that he will be booked into the Fresno County Jail," said Fresno County District Attorney Lisa Sondergaard Smittcamp. "He'll be treated like any other criminal suspect."

Dinnell was promoted to sergeant in 2018.

His wife retired from the Fresno County Sheriff's Office.

In an arrest warrant Action News uncovered, investigators say she told another sergeant she found meth in her husband's clothes a year earlier.

After the crash, she told him to go to rehab, according to the sergeant.

She later told investigators the sergeant might've misunderstood her.

Chief Balderrama says it's tough to see this happen with any officer.

"They're still human beings and in this case, it may be a situation where he actually has a dependency on a drug," he said.

Dinnell worked through his attorney and the courts to turn himself.

His attorney couldn't tell us if they had a plan of action yet.

He's still on leave at the police department, but Chief Balderrama says he's going through the process of terminating Dinnell.

Dinnell is scheduled to appear in court on May 5.

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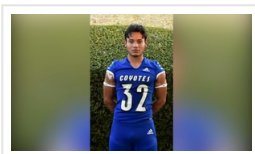
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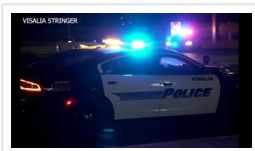


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