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September 22, 2025



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**Iowa Attorney General's Review  
of Officer Involved Death**

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Incident of August 21, 2025  
Knoxville, Iowa

Knoxville Police Department Sergeant Joseph Wepler

Subject Involved: Steven Funk

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## **Executive Summary**

At 11:13 p.m. on August 21, 2025, Marion County dispatch received a 911 call from Andrea Funk indicating that her husband, Steven Funk, had crashed his car into the house, rupturing the gas line and that he was trying to get in the house in violation of a no contact order. The phone line remained open. Andrea frantically screamed for help as she heard Funk gain entry into the house, beat on the bedroom door, and then gain entry into the bedroom itself, where he began to strangle her.

Officers on scene got to the bedroom door and could hear Andrea screaming, then gagging. Funk blocked the door with his body as he strangled Andrea, preventing the officers from getting into the room. When one of the officers was able to partially squeeze through the door, he could see Funk with his hand still squeezing around Andrea's throat. He refused the officer's command to stop and was shot, later dying from his injuries.

## **Detailed Factual Summary**

On the night of August 21, 2025, at 11:13 p.m. Andrea Funk called 911 for help. She had been sleeping in her bedroom at her home in Knoxville when she woke to find her husband, Steven Funk, had crashed his car into her bedroom wall. In doing so, he

had ruptured the gas line. She could see on her doorbell camera that it was Steven. He was messing with the gas line, then began trying to get into the home.

At the time, there was a no contact order in place from a criminal charge brought against Steven Funk on August 16, 2025. In that incident, Steven Funk injured himself with a rolling pin and called the police claiming Andrea had hurt him. During the course of that investigation, Steven admitted to these facts, and he was charged with making false reports to law enforcement and harassment. He was served with a no contact order that day which prevented him from having any contact with Andrea Funk.

After the no contact order had been put in place, Andrea installed deadbolt locks on all three of the exterior doors to the home for her safety. She was aware that Steven had a long-standing alcohol addiction, and his behavior had become increasingly hostile. Between August 16, when the no contact order had been put into place, and the night of August 21, Steven had complied with the no contact order and had not attempted to talk with Andrea.

When Andrea called 911 on August 21, she knew Steven had crashed his car into the corner of the home where her bedroom was, the gas line had been ruptured and there was no electrical power, and Steven was trying to force his way into the home. She was able

to relay all of this information to the 911 dispatcher. She let the dispatcher know that there was no one else in the home and there was no way for her to safely get out of the house. The house was a ranch style home which sat facing east toward South Roche Street, and which had a gravel alley running along the north side of the home. Andrea's bedroom was at the back northwest corner of the home and opened only into a hallway. Any attempt to leave that room would have put her in the middle of the home and in harm's way.

Sergeant Joseph Wepler and Officer Matthew Eagleton of the Knoxville Police Department both responded to the call. Both had also been the officers to respond to the previous call on August 16, and were familiar with the layout of the home, and with Andrea and Steven Funk. Wepler was within a few blocks the night of August 21 and arrived quickly, running up to the home and trying to get in first through the north door along the alley. He could see a car crashed into the northwest corner of the home and could see that it had ruptured the gas line. The escaping gas emitted a loud hissing noise and Wepler requested fire and medical response head their way due to this.

Wepler found the north door locked and yelled for Steven to open the door. When he got no response, he began to try to kick the door in. When that was unsuccessful, he went to the front door on

the east side of the home and was joined by Officer Eagleton. They were unable to get into the home through the front door, as it also was locked. Both officers returned to the north door by the gas line to try to kick the door in.

During this time the dispatcher was still on the phone with Andrea, who was increasingly scared as she could tell that Steven had gotten into the house. She could not leave the bedroom safely and the room had no lock on the door. As officers were trying to break into the house, Steven was trying to break into the bedroom as Andrea tried to keep it shut. The dispatcher could hear Andrea crying and screaming, “He’s coming! Hurry up!” and then “Steve’s in the bedroom! Hurry up!” Steven shoved his way into the bedroom with a board from their fence and told Andrea, “You first.” He then grabbed Andrea by the throat.

The dispatcher heard Andrea scream, “He’s got me!” and continued to relay these updates to the officers who were finally able to break in the north door. Sergeant Weppler entered first with his firearm drawn and immediately announced himself. Officer Eagleton followed with first his firearm drawn, then switched to his taser as a less than lethal option. They could hear Andrea scream and Weppler shouted, “Steve where are you?” Both men made it to the hallway where they heard Andrea scream and then gag. As they approached the bedroom door, they could hear Andrea

screaming, but with a rasp. She said, “He’s in here” and “He’s choking me” but officers could hear that her voice was strained. During this time the phone line with dispatch was still open and the dispatcher could hear the same screams, gagging, and choking noises.

Both officers got to the bedroom door. Wepler had his flashlight in his left hand and his firearm in his right. He was able to open the door in part way, but it was shoved back by Steven Funk on the other side. Wepler braced his left shoulder against the door to try to hold it open. Steven said, “Who is it?” to which Wepler responded that it was the police department and asked, “Where’s Steve?” They then heard a gasping wheeze from Andrea. She gasped out, “Behind the door” and Wepler shoved the door open, though was still not able to open it fully. He was able to angle his body slightly into the doorway to see behind it into the room and saw Steven with his back braced against the door and using his right hand to squeeze Andrea by the throat. Steven Funk looked Wepler in the eye but did not release his strangle hold on Andrea. Steven continued pushing on the door trying to keep the officer out. Wepler was able to raise his gun and shot Steven three times, which finally caused Steven to release Andrea. As he slowly went to a seated position on the ground, officers could see that Steven was wearing a sweatshirt and shoes but was not wearing pants or

underwear. The fence board was on the ground near the door with nails still protruding from it. Steven's position in the small area behind the door prevented it from being opened all the way, but officers were eventually able to open it enough to get Andrea out of the room.

Officer Eagleton got Andrea safely outside. The Marion County Sheriff's Office arrived and assisted with scene security. Sergeant Wepler stayed with Steven as he was initially conscious and breathing. Officer Eagleton returned with medical supplies and both officers rendered what aid they could until medical personnel arrived. Medical aid was provided to both Steven and Andrea on scene and then both were taken to a local hospital. Due to the severity of the gas leak the area was evacuated until such time as the gas company could address the issue.

Andrea was treated at the hospital and released. Steven Funk died from his injuries. The gas company was able to turn off the gas to the area before any further damage was sustained.

### **Subsequent Investigation**

Officers were able to determine that after driving his car east down the alley and crashing into the back northwest corner of the home, Steven Funk had torn off the video doorbell by the north door of the home, broken off a panel of fence in the back yard, and kicked

in the back door on the west side of the house. His shorts and underwear were found by the west door as well. There was an empty beer can in his car and multiple empty and full beer cans in the hotel room where he had been staying.

Law enforcement officers in the area were familiar with Steven Funk as he had previously served as a Warren County Sheriff's Office Deputy. In recent years law enforcement had dealt with numerous instances in which Funk was intoxicated. During one of those prior instances, he had been in possession of a firearm. It was reported that within the last two years his drinking had gotten progressively worse, as had his mental health.

### **Process and Authority**

The Iowa Division of Criminal Investigation (DCI) investigated the incident, and its investigation is complete. DCI interviewed the officers involved and reviewed the officers' body camera recordings where available. DCI reviewed evidence and reports from the Knoxville Police Department, the Marion County Sheriff's Office, and the Iowa Office of the State Medical Examiner.

The Attorney General's Office has authority under Iowa Code § 13.12 to assess any officer-involved death to determine whether criminal charges are warranted. The office has had a full opportunity to review the findings of the investigation and discuss

the investigation with the assigned agent. All law enforcement reports, including audio or video recordings, will be returned to DCI when this report is issued.

### **Applicable Law**

To be justified, the force an officer uses must be reasonable. Force is reasonable if a reasonable person, in like circumstances, would judge the force to be necessary to prevent an injury or loss. It can include deadly force if (1) it is reasonable to believe that such force is necessary to avoid injury or risk to the person's or another person's life or safety and (2) it is reasonable to believe that such force is necessary to resist a like force or threat. Iowa Code §§ 704.1, 704.2, and 704.3.

In *Graham v. Connor*, 490 U.S. 386 (1989), the United States Supreme Court held that the use of deadly force by a police officer must be evaluated from the perspective of a reasonable police officer on the scene and in the same circumstances. Under *Graham*, reasonableness of police use of force cannot be evaluated from the perspective of a civilian or the perspective afforded by 20/20 hindsight. The Court further stated that the fact that law enforcement officers are often required to react quickly in tense, uncertain, and rapidly evolving situations are factors that must be considered in determining reasonableness.

## **Analysis**

Sergeant Joseph Wepler's use of deadly force against Steven Funk was necessary to save Andrea Funk's life and was justified. Andrea called 911 in fear for her safety. Dispatch listened in as that fear escalated when Steven Funk got into the home, then into the bedroom, and grabbed Andrea by the throat. As officers were able to enter, they announced their presence by calling for Steven and he clearly knew they were in the home. Yet he did not respond and continued assaulting his wife while she screamed and gasped for air. Strangulation can result in serious bodily harm or death. When officers got to the door, they identified who they were, and Steven Funk's only response was to try to close the door on them and continue trying to kill Andrea by strangulation. He looked the officer in the eye and did not flinch, did not yield, and was not going to stop. Sergeant Wepler could not get through the door entirely to stop the threat. By firing on Steven Funk, Sergeant Joseph Wepler stopped a murder in progress and saved the life of Andrea Funk.

## **Conclusion**

The Iowa Attorney General's Office concludes that the law enforcement officer's actions in this incident were legally justified and that criminal charges are unwarranted. It considers the criminal investigation into this incident to be closed.