



CITY OF PUNTA GORDA

A Florida Accredited **EXCELSIOR AGENCY**

POLICE

1410 Tamiami Trail
Punta Gorda, FL 33950
941-639-4111
www.puntagordapolice.com

NEWS RELEASE

August 9, 2016

Punta Gorda Police Department Reports Tragic Accident During Simulation Presentation

On Aug. 9, 2016, the Punta Gorda Police Department hosted approximately 35 civilians from the community for a two hour Citizen Police Academy, during which time two participants were randomly selected to be put through a "shoot/don't shoot" scenario in which they make decisions on using simulated lethal force in a live role play.

During the first scenario, participant Mary Knowlton was struck with a live round and was fatally injured. She was transported to Lee Memorial Hospital where she was pronounced dead.

Chief Tom Lewis stated, "I am devastated for everyone involved in this unimaginable event. If you pray, please pray for Mary's family, and for the officers who were involved. Everyone involved in this accident is in a state of overwhelming shock and grief."

Chief Tom Lewis contacted the Florida Department of Law Enforcement to respond and begin an investigation into the events surrounding this incident. The involved officer has been placed on administrative leave pending the outcome of this investigation. Florida Department of Law Enforcement personnel are now on scene and have taken command of the investigation.

The Punta Gorda Police Department realizes the community has many questions about this incident. We also must take great care to not jeopardize the investigation. As the investigation continues and more information is available we will release it.

Prepared by:

Lieutenant Katie Heck

Community Services

Punta Gorda Police Department

(941) 575-5525

kheck@pgorda.us