



# News Release

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"Creating a Safer Community  
Together."

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## Deputies were within policy for shooting on January 7<sup>th</sup>

OLYMPIA –The Thurston County Sheriff's Office convened a mandatory Shooting Review Board on January 15<sup>th</sup>, 2008 to determine if the actions of Deputy Rod Ditrich and Deputy Carlos Benavidez on the evening of January 7, 2008 when David Varpness was shot after a pursuit, were justified and within Sheriff's Office policy.

On Jan. 7<sup>th</sup> Deputies had responded to assist the Lacey Police Department with a pursuit of a felony suspect. The pursuit ended near Priest Point Park, in the City of Olympia after the suspect vehicle ran over a spike strip. The suspect exited his vehicle with what appeared to be a weapon and failed to disarm when ordered to. The suspect, David Varpness, age 20, deliberately walked directly at the officers and failed to stop or put down the weapon when he was ordered to. Deputy Rod Ditrich, fearing for his safety and that of other officers, fired one time at the suspect. Deputy Benavidez did not fire his weapon. Other shots were fired by a Lacey Officer but were not reviewed by this process. The suspect was struck once in the thigh and was taken into custody. After his release from medical treatment he was booked into the Thurston County Jail on felony assault and eluding charges.

The Shooting Review Board consisted of 6 members. One was the Undersheriff from Mason County. The other 5 were Thurston County Sheriff's Office members of various ranks. The composition of the review board is directed by policy. The Review Board was presented information about the investigation by the Olympia Police Department. While the investigation is not totally complete, all investigative details necessary for this review were available. **The Review Board has determined that the actions by both Deputies were justified and within policy.** The Deputies will be allowed to return to full duty. The Sheriff's Office is confident both Deputies are fit and able to perform their duties. Deputies Ditrich and Benavidez showed great restraint and good judgment in their actions on January 7<sup>th</sup>.

Chief Criminal Deputy Jim Chamberlain