

Comments by Virginia Tech Chief of Police
Wendell Flinchum on May 21, 2007 to the
Virginia Tech Review Panel concerning the
Police response at WAJ on 4-16-07

Col Massengill and members of the panel. My name is Wendell Flinchum and I am the Chief of Police for the Virginia Tech Police Department. I am pleased to have the opportunity to speak to you about the Virginia Tech Police Department response to the events at West Ambler Johnston Hall on April 16, 2007.

I would like to point out that the police investigation is still on-going and some of the information could change as the investigation progresses.

I would like to first tell you about the Virginia Tech Police Department. Our department was formed around 1945 and has grown into a professional organization. The department is currently nationally accredited by the Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies (CALEA). CALEA is an independent organization established to develop a set of law enforcement standards that would improve the delivery of police services around the country. CALEA accredits police departments throughout the country if those departments can meet CALEA standards. The Blacksburg Police Department and the Virginia State Police are also accredited by CALEA. Our department is one of only a few University police departments in the country that are nationally accredited and is one of three University police departments in Virginia. We received our third re-accreditation in November 2006.

Our department is a full service law enforcement agency. We currently have 40 sworn officers which are assisted by security guards, communication officers and administrative staff. The officers are highly trained and attend the same police academy as our local police and sheriff's departments. We formed an Emergency Response Team (ERT) in 1991 and this team trains regularly with the Blacksburg Police department's ERT. This team and our entire department have a close working relationship with the Blacksburg Police department which was demonstrated on April 16, 2007.

I will now go into the police response at West Ambler Johnston on April 16, 2007 based on the information we knew and obtained that morning.

West Ambler Johnston Hall Police Response on April 16, 2007

Chief Wendell Flinchum
Virginia Tech Police Dept.

***Times as recorded by VTPD Dispatch**

WAJ - THE INITIAL CALL*

- **7:20 AM - April 16, 2007 - Initial call is received on a VTPD administrative telephone line.**
 - **Caller advises dispatcher that a female student in Room 4040 West Ambler Johnston (WAJ) Hall had possibly fallen from her loft bed.**
 - **Caller was provided information by another WAJ resident who was "near" Room 4040 and heard what sounded like someone falling out of a loft.**

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Virginia Tech Police Dept.

WAJ - Police/Rescue Response*

- **7:21 AM - VTPD Dispatcher notifies VT Rescue Squad of female student possibly fallen from her loft bed in WAJ.**

- **7:21 AM - VTPD officer is dispatched to 4040 WAJ to accompany VT Rescue Squad (per VTPD protocol.)**

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WAJ - Police/Rescue Response*

- **7:24 AM VTPD officer arrives at WAJ.**
 - After arriving at 4040 WAJ, VTPD officer finds that two people have been shot inside the room; immediately requests additional VTPD resources.

- **7:30 AM - Additional VTPD officers begin arriving at Room 4040.**

Chief Wendell Flinchum
Virginia Tech Police Dept.

WAJ - Police/Rescue Response

- **VTPD officers securing crime scene; starting preliminary investigation.**
 - Preliminary resident interviews unable to provide a suspect description.
 - No one on floor or in WAJ saw anyone leave Room 4040 after the initial noise was heard.

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Virginia Tech Police Dept.

**Estimated Time; No Dispatch Entry.

WAJ - Police Response

- **7:40 AM – VTPD Chief Flinchum notified by phone of WAJ shootings.****
- **7:51 AM - Chief Flinchum contacts Blacksburg Police Department (BPD)**
 - Requests BPD Evidence Technician respond to WAJ.
 - Requests BPD Detective to assist with investigation.

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Virginia Tech Police Dept.

WAJ - Police Response

- **7:57 A.M. - Chief Flinchum notifies the Office of the Executive Vice President.****

- **8:00 A.M. - Chief Flinchum arrives at scene in WAJ.** (Time as recorded by Chief Flinchum's card swipe at WAJ)
 - By this time, VTPD Detectives and BPD Detectives already on scene at WAJ; investigation underway.
 - Local State Police Special Agent contacted; responded to scene.

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Virginia Tech Police Dept.

WAJ - Police Response

- **8:11 AM – Blacksburg Police Chief Kim Crannis arrives on scene.** (Time as recorded by BPD Dispatch)

- **8:13 A.M. - Chief Flinchum requests additional VTPD & BPD officers on scene to assist with securing WAJ entrances and assist in investigation.** (Time as recorded by VTPD Dispatch)

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WAJ - Police Response

- **8:15 A.M. - Chief Flinchum requests VTPD Emergency Response Team (ERT - VTPD equivalent of a SWAT Team) respond in anticipation of search warrants and/or arrest warrant service.**

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WAJ - Police Response

- **8:19 AM - Chief Crannis requests BPD ERT respond for the same reason.**
- **9:15 AM - Both ERT teams are staged at the Blacksburg Police Department in anticipation of search warrants and/or arrest warrant service.**

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WAJ - Police Response

- **Witness tells VTPD investigators about acquaintance of Emily Hilscher; individual may have been with her earlier that same morning.**
 - Individual not a VT student; Individual does not live on campus. Officers searching for info on acquaintance.
 - Investigators search for acquaintance's vehicle in campus parking lots; become more confident individual has left campus.
 - VTPD & BPD officers sent to acquaintance's residence; individual is not home; surveillance initiated.

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WAJ - Police Response

- **BOL (Be On the Lookout report) to Blacksburg Police Department and Montgomery County Sheriff's Office for individual's vehicle.**
 - All of the previous actions including the BOL, occurred between 8:16 AM and 9:24 AM.

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WAJ - Police Response

- **Meanwhile...on campus:**
 - Officers canvassing WAJ for possible witnesses.
 - VTPD, BPD, & VSP processing Room 4040 crime scene and gathering evidence.
 - Officers searching interior and exterior waste containers and surrounding areas near WAJ for evidence.

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Virginia Tech Police Dept.

WAJ - Police Response

- **Meanwhile...on campus:**
 - Investigators securing identification of victims.
 - Following up with rescue squad personnel for any additional evidence/information.
 - Allocating & assigning additional responding law enforcement.
 - Trying to locate the first resident who told the Resident Advisor about the noise in 4040 WAJ

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Virginia Tech Police Dept.

WAJ - Police Response

➤ Note...

- VT residence halls were already locked before, during, & following the WAJ double-shooting. (Exterior residence hall doors are locked from 10:00 P.M. to 10:00 A.M.)
- All evidence recovered from WAJ crime scene and witness information gathered at WAJ indicated the WAJ scene was an isolated, singular event; never any indication of additional killings to follow.
- Even after a month into the WAJ & Norris Hall investigations, still no information from the WAJ crime scene that would indicate that the Norris Hall shootings would later occur.

Chief Wendell Flinchum
Virginia Tech Police Dept.

WAJ - Police Response

- From 8:10 AM to 9:25 AM - Chief Flinchum provides updated information via phone to VT Policy Group regarding progress made in WAJ investigation...as it becomes available.
- 9:25 AM - VTPD Police Captain joins VT Policy Group and provides updates as information becomes available.

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WAJ - Police Response

- **9:24 A.M. - Montgomery County Deputy Sheriff alerts on acquaintance's vehicle and initiates traffic stop off campus.**
 - Detectives en-route to assist with questioning acquaintance.
 - **9:31 A.M. - VSP Trooper marks on-scene to assist Montgomery County Deputy Sheriff with traffic stop. (Time as recorded by VSP Salem Division Dispatch)**

- **9:30 - 9:42 A.M. - Questioning of acquaintance ongoing.**

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Virginia Tech Police Dept.

*Times as recorded by VTPD Dispatch

Norris Hall - Police/Rescue Response

- **9:42 A.M. - First call made to VTPD Dispatch about shooting at Norris Hall.**

- **9:45 A.M. -VTPD and BPD officers are first to arrive at Norris Hall.**

- **9:50 AM - First team of officers on Second Floor inside Norris Hall; last shot fired as they reach second floor landing; triage and rescue of victims begins immediately.**

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Virginia Tech Police Dept.