

# JOPLIN

# POLICE

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Jason Burns  
Chief of Police

**Date:** December 10, 2015  
**Origin:** Department PIO  
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## Update#6

Beginning today, December 10, 2015, Officer Seth Lugenbell and Officer Brett Davis are returned to active duty. The Missouri State Highway Patrol (MSHP) investigation yielded that Officer Lugenbell engaged Hill with his firearm as a result of Hill driving directly at Officer Lugenbell. Officer Davis did not deploy his firearm. The MSHP investigation determined that the use of force used by Officer Lugenbell was justified.

The MSHP will conduct an administrative review of their investigation. There will be a delay before the compilation and availability of the MSHP report.

The internal investigation, conducted by the Joplin Police Department's Professional Standards Bureau, continues. However, preliminary results of this facet of the investigation yields no reason for the officers to remain on administrative leave and they can return to serving the community.

The criminal investigation into the actions of Hill is complete. Pending the medical recovery of Hill, the Joplin Police Department will submit for review the following charges to the Newton County Prosecutor:

1. 1<sup>st</sup> Degree Assault on a law enforcement officer.
2. Driving While Intoxicated
3. Driving While Suspended
4. Resisting Arrest

## Update#5

On November 30, when officers initially responded to 3330 S. Texas Ave. Apt. 102, at 9:16 PM, Jeffrey L. Hill had broken a window and had been attempting to force his way into the apartment in an attempt to contact Mindy D. Melton-Bauersfeld. Hill had fled the scene prior to the first arrival.

The primary residents of the apartment are Ann and Michael Essig. Ann Essig signed a complaint against Hill for property destruction.

An unsigned complaint for domestic assault was completed by the officer on behalf of Melton-Bauersfeld.

At 10:37 p.m., officers again responded in reference to a disturbance. Hill had returned to the apartment and was pounding on the door as well as the previously broken window.

An occupant of the apartment opened the door and asked him to leave and Hill shoved his way inside briefly before Michael Essig was able to push Hill back out.

Hill was in the process of fleeing the scene when he then drove his vehicle at the officer.

*One element of assault is defined by state statute as purposely or knowingly placing or attempting to place another in fear of physical harm.*

*The Domestic Assault statute covers family or household member, spouses, former spouses, any person related by blood or marriage, persons who are presently residing together or have resided together in the past, any person who is or has been in a continuing social relationship of a romantic or intimate nature with the victim, and anyone who has a child in common regardless of whether they have been married or have resided together at any time.*

#### **Update#4**

The evidence at the scene and independent witness statements corroborate that Hill drove his vehicle directly at the officer.

Hill's actions caused the officer to be in fear of serious physical injury or death.

The officer responded by firing multiple gunshots at Hill.

#### **Update#3**

There are three separate and concurrent investigations. This is usual and customary practice. The Missouri State Highway Patrol is conducting an investigation into the officer involved shooting. The Joplin Police Department Investigations Bureau is conducting an investigation into the actions of Mr. Hill including his actions prior to our arrival and including his interactions with the officers upon their arrival to the second call. The Joplin Police Department Professional Standards Bureau is conducting an investigation into the entire incident to ensure that officer actions are consistent and in alignment with department policy and training.

There is no body-worn camera video of this incident available. One officer had a body-worn camera but it was not activated at the time of the event.

#### **Update#2**

The suspect in this event is identified as Jeffrey L. Hill, 49, Joplin (photo attached). Hill remains under care at Freeman Hospital.

#### **Update#1**

The Missouri State Highway Patrol continues to investigate this incident. The suspect remain hospitalized as a result of his injuries sustained in this event. Officer Seth Lugenbell and Officer Brett Davis are removed from line-duty assignment pending administrative review. Department policy requires that any officer whose action(s) or use of force has seriously injured another person shall be removed from line-duty. This policy also covers involved officers. An involved officer is defined as an officer whose conduct was not the cause in fact of the injury but who was involved in the incident before or during the use of force. This action protects both the officer's and the community's interest until the situation is resolved.

### **NEWS RELEASE**

On November 30, 2015, at 9:16 PM, the Joplin Police Department responded to 3330 S. Texas, Oxford Apartments, in reference to a domestic assault. The suspect had fled the scene prior to the arrival of officers.

Officers were again called to this location at 10:37 PM in reference to a disturbance. Upon arrival, officers were confronted with the same suspect from the earlier event and one officer was involved in a shooting. The suspect sustained gunshot injuries and was transported by ambulance to Freeman Hospital where he continues to receive medical treatment. No officers were injured in this incident.

At the request of the Joplin Police Department, the Missouri State Highway Patrol responded to conduct the investigation.

In accordance with standard practice, the officer involved in the shooting has been placed on administrative leave.

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