

CALIFORNIA

# Security guard was shot and killed outside San Diego homeless shelter

By Pauline Repard

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An unarmed security guard was fatally shot Saturday night at a homeless shelter in San Diego's downtown East Village district.

A San Diego homicide lieutenant said the guard was on the sidewalk outside the Alpha Project's Imperial Bridge Shelter when he was shot several times in the upper body. The shooter remained at large, police said.

Police said passersby flagged down patrol officers at about the same time as a shelter employee called 911. The victim was transported to the hospital, where he died within the hour, police said.

Several people in the immediate area ran away when they heard gunfire, so no one was able to give police a description of the shooter or even say if the shots came from a vehicle, homicide Lt. Martha Sainz said.

Police were withholding the victim's name until his family could be notified.

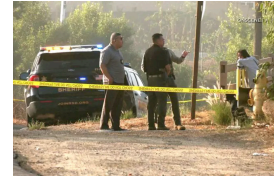
Bob McElroy, CEO of Alpha Project, said he was at the shelter at the time but declined to discuss what happened. Sainz said officers were viewing security camera footage.

The 150-bed shelter is a "bridge" between living on the streets and permanent housing. NBC 7 that there were 128 people in the shelter at the time of the shooting.

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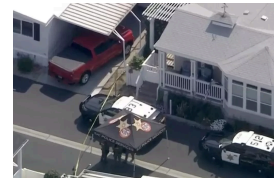
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Several homeless people who were outside waited in the cold for hours while the shooting investigation continued. Crisis counselors were brought in to assist distraught co-workers, according to police.

The Alpha Project website says its outreach program was founded in 1986 to offer work opportunities to homeless men. The organization has since expanded, creating 600 units of affordable rental housing and serving 4,000 people daily through its programs.

*Repard writes for the San Diego Union-Tribune.*