

THE SUNDAY STAR

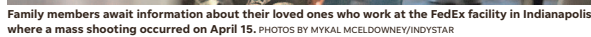
SUNDAY, APRIL 25, 2021
 "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty" II COR. 3:17

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 SAVINGS

Bill might be nursing homes' big protector

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See AGONIZING, Page 2A



Two people hug after learning that their loved one was safe after a gunman shot and killed 8 people at a FedEx facility.



Nursing home resident Mary Ellen Zenn joins her son, Duane Zenn, and daughter-in-law, Roberta Zenn, in 2020. DUANE AND ROBERTA ZENN

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USA TODAY **Quantity or quality?** Gregg Doyl says the Colts don't need to trade down for more picks; they must trade up for elite pass rusher. **18**

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INDYSTAR SUNDAY START

CELEBRITY BIRTHDAYS

April 25

Actor **Al Pacino** is 81. "Dancing With the Stars" judge **Len Goodman** is 77. Bassist **Stu Cook** of Creedence Clearwater Revisited is 76. Singer **Bjorn Ulvaeus** of ABBA is 76. Actor **Talia Shire** is 76. Actor **Jeffrey DeMunn** ("The Green Mile") is 74. Country singer-songwriter **Rob Crosby** is 67. Actor **Hank Azaria** ("The Simpsons") is 57. Singer **Andy Bell** of Erasure is 57. Bassist **Eric Avery** (Jane's Addiction) is 56. Guitarist **Rory Feek** of Joey and Rory is 56. Former "Early Show" host **Jane Clayson** is 54. Actor **Gina Torres** ("I Think I Love My Wife") is 52. Actor **Renee Zellweger** is 52. Actor **Jason Lee** ("My Name Is Earl", "Almost Famous") is 51. Actor **Jason Wiles** ("Third Watch") is 51. Actor **Emily Bergl** ("Southland") is 46. Actor **Marguerite Moreau** ("The O.C.", "Life As We Know It") is 44. Singer **Jacob Underwood** (O-Town) is 41. Actor **Allison Snyder** ("A.P. Bio", "Sonny With A Chance") is 25. Actor **Jayden Rey** ("The Connors") is 12.



Pacino



Making families wait so long to find out the fate of their loved ones worsened the painful tragedy of the FedEx facility mass shooting, some Indianapolis authorities told IndyStar. MYKAL MCELLOWNEY/INDYSTAR

Agonizing

Continued from Page 1A

"There was a desperation there — to know what happened, to know anything," he said. "There was crying and hugging and a search for answers."

As the hours passed and the families of survivors reunited and slowly left, a brutal process of elimination played out.

At about 2:30 p.m. Wala said, the families of the eight victims were summoned to a separate private room at the hotel. There, police, coroner's officials and chaplains showed them pictures of their loved ones.

Final confirmation, 15 hours later, that their loved ones were dead.

Making families wait that long to find out the fate of their loved ones worsened the painful tragedy, some Indianapolis authorities told IndyStar.

And when IndyStar inquired about the delay, a lot of finger-pointing ensued from one agency to the next.

The coroner said other agencies blocked them from doing their work. The Marion County Forensic Services Agency pointed to police saying the police department is in charge of who can access a crime scene. The Indianapolis Metropolitan Police Department told IndyStar that they now plan to conduct a review of what unfolded.

Deputy Coroner Alfarena McGinty told IndyStar that Marion County coroners were denied access to the scene until 1 p.m. Friday — 14 hours after the shooter's rampage. That delayed the identification and notification process, which typically takes about six hours, McGinty said.

"It was inefficient and disheartening to wait so long to get into the scene," McGinty said. "We can't be denied when families are waiting. We've got to figure out something because this can never happen again."

"We will look to see if there are shortcomings that can be addressed to reduce those agonizing hours for the families if, God forbid, this happens again," Craig McCart, IMPD chief of investigations, said.

Further complicating matters was a ban on cellphones inside the FedEx facility for most workers that made it hard even for those who were safe to contact their loved ones.

McCart said police chaplains, the chief and other officials were in constant contact with the families. FedEx also instructed some of their staff to help police with names of employees who were supposed to work that night.

"We had people standing with the families the whole time, giving them explanations, walking them through the process and literally holding their hands," McCart

said. "They realized that the magnitude of this and the shock value of it made it that much more important to do so."

Robert A. Jensen, chairman of Kenyon International Emergency Services and an expert on the handling of mass casualty incidents, said all agencies involved owe an explanation to the survivors and the victims' families.

"The system — by having a shooting at 11 o'clock at night and not telling people until the next day about their loved ones, their condition, or if they were dead versus alive or what was going on," Jensen said, "has done some damage."

What caused the delay?

McGinty said her investigators arrived at FedEx about 7:30 a.m. and tried to enter the scene at 9:30 a.m. After being denied by either the crime lab or detectives, she said her staff waited for almost four hours.

"We could do nothing while waiting," she said. Once granted access at 1 p.m., McGinty said the victims were identified and notifications were finished in 2 ½ hours.

Richard Amberger, laboratory director of the Indianapolis-Marion County Forensic Services Agency, said he couldn't "opine" on anything that occurred at the FedEx facility, but the agencies followed the same protocol as for other homicides. First, police secure the scene, then the crime lab gathers evidence and then they bring in the coroner.

The decision to allow or deny access to a crime scene falls to IMPD, he said.

"They are the ones that authorized any access, notification and such," Amberger said. "All the crime lab does is evidence preservation and collection."

McCart said the lead detective is in charge of the scene but mostly defers to the expertise of the crime lab for evidence collection.

"There is a whole of lot teamwork and collaboration that normally goes on though police, crime lab and the coroner are separate agencies with different specialties," McCart said.

But McGinty said the FedEx crime scene was different than others and shouldn't have been treated the same way, in which documenting the evidence was crucial to catching a killer. Especially with dozens of families desperate for answers.

"Here, the suspect was already dead," she said. "This would be more like a natural disaster mass casualty, in which you go in right away to identify."

Though the shooter at FedEx was dead, the collection of evidence still had to be thorough because police were uncertain whether anyone else was involved, McCart said.

"We don't want to take shortcuts," he said. "The last thing we want is that we didn't get the evidence we needed when it comes time to go to court."

'Who do they hold accountable'

Jensen of Kenyon International has written a book on how to respond to mass casualties. His agency provides emergency planning, training, exercising and response, and he's personally overseen response to events including the Oklahoma City bombing, Hurricane Katrina and the Grenfell Tower fire.

He said unless the scene was still considered unsafe, there's no reason why a crime lab technician and a coroner couldn't do their work simultaneously.

There should have been some communication to the victims' families before Friday afternoon, he said.

A preliminary identification could have saved many families hours of grief. It's a risk some agencies don't want to take, Jensen said, because they'd rather wait than chance being wrong. But an over-15-hour lag between an incident and family notification is "far too long," he said.

The coroner's investigators usually go in after the crime lab is finished. They use pictures, fingerprints, DNA or dental records to help identify victims from their families or independently. Sometimes notifications are delayed because next of kin are difficult to find.

This wasn't the case with the FedEx massacre; the loved ones were nearby, gathered at the hotel.

"Because this was so public and known, I would've expected that in the middle of the night the coroners were out trying to notify families," Jensen said, "either through getting information from FedEx or through getting information from the decedent, such as a wallet or driver's license and then collecting the information from the systems available in Indianapolis."

McCart said murder scenes have an established protocol, with the coroner kept away until the crime lab is finished so no one tracks microscopic materials into or out of the scene.

McCart said authorities would review whether it would be possible to break from that regular practice to speed up identifications in mass killings.

"I can't imagine being in their (families') shoes, they just wanted answers," McCart said. "If there is a way to alleviate that extended grief we will do it."

But he said a slaughter of this magnitude was rare and new to police.

"This is one of those situations we constantly plan and train for but when it happens," McCart said, the situation doesn't always jibe with what's on paper.

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LOTTERIES

Some of Saturday's Indiana numbers were drawn too late for this edition.

Here are the midday numbers selected Saturday:

Daily Three-Midday: 0-9-0; SB: 7;

Daily Four-Midday: 6-5-9-0; SB: 7;

Quick Draw-Midday: 1-4-6-8-9-15-23-25-33-34-35-36-41-44-53-57-69-71-73-74; BE: 73;

Here are the evening numbers drawn Friday:

Daily Three-Evening: 5-5-1; SB: 7;

Daily Four-Evening: 7-7-3-6; SB: 07;

Cash Five: 5-16-17-27-38;

Quick Draw-Evening: 3-5-7-12-13-19-20-21-26-32-34-37-41-42-51-54-57-58-59-67; BE: 57;

* Winning numbers provided by the Hoosier Lottery.

PRAYER

As the pandemic begins to lift, O God, help us continue to practice fully and diligently the disciplines needed to help everyone live. Amen.

CORRECTIONS

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Postal information

The Indianapolis Star, USPS #262-680, is published Monday through Sunday at 130 S. Meridian St., Indianapolis, IN 46225. Periodicals postage paid at Indianapolis, IN 46225. Postmaster: Send address changes to Customer Service, PO Box 62870, San Angelo, TX 76906.