

Toronto police drug squad officer dies of fentanyl overdose

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Several drug cases due in court may be in question after a Toronto drug squad officer died of a fentanyl overdose.

In a statement, acting police chief Jim Ramer said Const. Michael Thompson was found at his home in medical distress on April 10. Thompson was rushed to hospital, where he died three days later.

Ramer said the quantity of fentanyl was “too large to have been caused by mere contact with that drug,” and that Thompson’s death has left the force with “more questions than answers.”

Ramer also sent his condolences to Thompson’s family and colleagues.

Some of the cases Thompson was involved in were due in court starting on Monday.

“By working with the Crown, the Service has learned that because of his death, and the circumstances under which it happened, changes will be made to how these cases proceed, or not, through the justice system,” the police statement read.

“The range of possibilities is open now,” lawyer Julian Falconer told CityNews, when asked about what Thompson’s death could mean for the court cases moving forward.

“Everything from it having a minor impact to cases being thrown out are all equally possible scenarios. It’s really a question of the role this officer’s evidence played in the strength of the crown’s case on a given trial. It’s hard to say, you can’t generalize but obviously this is a sad day for this officer’s family. But it’s also a sad day for the justice system, given the role this officer had in court cases.”

Toronto police told CityNews that it is not yet known if Thompson, who lived in Durham Region, stole the drug from evidence or if he bought on the street.

Police learned of the pathology and toxicology results in late July. At that time, they launched investigations into Thompson’s professional responsibilities, personal wellness, as well as the processes and protocols into how evidence is handled in the drug squad.

Police believe Thompson’s overdose was an isolated incident at the drug squad, based on their own investigations.

Thompson’s death comes on the heels of an opioid overdose crisis, which claimed the lives of 865 people in Ontario last year.