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21-year veteran of sheriff's office resigns after sex investigation

By KVAL.com staff | Published: Apr 1, 2011 at 3:59 PM PDT (2011-04-1T22:59:52Z) | Last Updated: Apr 1, 2011 at 5:43 PM PDT (2011-04-2T0:43:1Z)

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Fred Swank

EUGENE, Ore. - A 21-year veteran of the Lane County Sheriff's office resigned Friday after a police investigation into his conduct.

Sgt. Fred Ray Swank resigned at 2:30 p.m. Friday afternoon and forfeited his certification as an Oregon law enforcement officer following a police investigation into his conduct, Sheriff Tom Turner said.

The investigation looked into allegations of inappropriate sexual contact between Swank and participants in the Explorer program, Turner said. The program was suspended the day after the investigation started.

The incidents did not take place while Swank was on duty, the sheriff said.

"It's pretty disturbing news to hear about somebody you've worked with for many years and then you find out something like this," Turner told KVAL News. "We're trying to put the information out there so people have and just put the information out there as we get it. We'll stay out in front of it, and we'll do what we have to do to make it right."

Swank will not face criminal prosecution, however, due to the time since one of the incidents and the unwillingness of an alleged victim to testify, the sheriff's office said.

"We're horrified by the results of this," Turner said.

The criminal investigation focused on multiple events involving the two people.

"They're as serious as you get. An allegation of that nature is a Class A felony," Turner said.

Swank had served as a sergeant in the police services division for 8 of his 21 years with the sheriff's office. He has been involved with the Explorer Post for most of those 21 years.

The sheriff said Swank had a perfect record until now, and while he has resigned, he will not be charged with a crime.

"It has been determined that while some criminal conduct may have occurred, it is not prosecutable for a number of reasons," the sheriff's office said in a press release.

In one case, the victim was a minor at the time but the incident happened 15 years ago, outside the statute of limitations for prosecution.



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In the second, the victim is unwilling to press charges, the sheriff said.

The sheriff declined to offer the names, ages or genders of the alleged victims.

"Due to the intensely personal nature of this investigation, we are unable to release any specific information regarding potential victims," the sheriff's office said in a release. "We can say that there were at least two individuals involved, and they were affiliated with the Sheriff's Office at the time the alleged incidents took place."

The Eugene Police Department investigated the allegations. The Lane County District Attorney reviewed the case.

The sheriff's office said command staff became aware of the allegations Jan. 8, 2011, and within hours relieved Swank of his duties while a criminal investigation was conducted.

The sheriff said Swank resigned in lieu of termination and voluntarily forfeited his certification as a law enforcement officer in Oregon.

"This action effectively ends the investigation," the sheriff's office said. "We are committed to learning from this unfortunate event and improving our organization in whatever ways we can as we move forward from this difficult situation."

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