Hypothermia Fatality File

Worker charged after woman froze to death at assisted living facility

ONDURANT, Iowa (KCCI) – An employee at an Iowa assisted living facility has been charged in the death of a 77-year-old woman who was found outside the facility in sub-zero temperatures.

Catherine Forkpa, 30, is charged with dependent adult abuse and intentional reckless abuse in the death of 77-year-old Lynne Harriet Stewart. She is an employee at the Courtyard Estates at Hawthorne Crossing, an assisted living facility for people with dementia in Bondurant, Iowa.

Stewart, who was staying at the facility, was found outside in sub-zero temperatures Jan. 21 and later died at the hospital. The low temperature that morning was minus 9 degrees Fahrenheit.

Deputies with the Polk County Sheriff’s Office say Stewart died of hypothermia.

Authorities considered Stewart’s death “suspicious” in January, as first reported by KCCI.

According to reports from the Iowa Department of Inspections and Appeals, Courtyard Estates was fined $1,500 in summer 2020 for not having a policy or procedure for their alarm system. Assisted living programs for people with dementia are required to have an operating alarm system on each exit door.