

SOCF Inmate killed

Elam stabbed to death as Ashworth awaits execution

By **MARK SHAFFER**

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The Southern Ohio Correctional Facility was locked down a day before a scheduled execution after an inmate was stabbed to death Monday.

Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction Spokeswoman Andrea Dean identified the inmate as Rex Elam.

Elam was serving a 70 years to life sentence for aggravated murder, aggravated robbery, aggravated burglary, rape, escape and kidnapping. He had been in the prison system since March 19, 1992.

Elam died around noon.

"The warden (Ed Voorhies) and his staff were alerted to a problem in K Block," Dean said. K Block is a general population wing.

The name of Elam's assailant was not released on Monday afternoon, Dean said, pending the completion of an investigation by the Ohio State Highway Patrol, which investigates crimes that occur on state property.

"We do have a suspect and they are interrogating other inmates to get other information," Dean said. "The rest of the prison is in secure mode right now and this is the only incident that occurred today."

The attack has not affected the schedule of today's execution of Herman Dale Ashworth, who was sentenced to death for a 1996 beating death and robbery. He is considered a "volunteer," meaning that he has dropped all his court appeals.

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In 1997, Ashworth pleaded guilty to aggravated murder and aggravated robbery of Daniel Baker in Newark. On Sept. 10, 1996, the two men were drinking in a bar when they decided to go to another bar.

They were on their way back to the Wagon Wheel around 9 p.m. when Ashworth lured Baker into an alley and beat him with his fists and a 6-foot board and kicked him, according to Licking County Common Pleas Court documents and Ashworth's interview with police. He then took about \$40 from Baker and went back to the bar.

Baker didn't die in the initial assault and Ashworth went back and finished him later that night so he wouldn't identify him.

The 32-year-old told the Associated Press that he believes in the death penalty and doesn't want to spend his life in prison.

Ashworth is the fourth condemned prisoner to drop his appeals since Ohio resumed executions in 1999 with another volunteer, Wilford Berry. The state has put 16 men to death, including seven last year, since then.

The Associated Press contributed to this story. **MARK SHAFFER** can be reached at (740) 353-3101, ext. 235.