

the swim every day would not be laugh, and to catch up on all the icy cold. family news.

VCF CHILD PROTECTIVE SERVICES

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Foster parent indicted in death of infant boy

A foster parent who allegedly left an 11-day-old infant to die in an overheated van has been indicted on involuntary manslaughter charges, District Attorney Art Danner said yesterday.

Laura Herrero appeared in Santa Cruz Superior Court Friday morning to answer the charges. She was indicted Thursday on the charge.

Her next scheduled court appearance is on Oct. 21.

Danner, calling the case "an extremely difficult one to evaluate," said Herrero left 11-day-old Cedric Blan in a sealed van for over 4½ hours.

The baby's death, medical officials later said, was due to "system failure caused by overexposure to sustained high temperatures."

The indictment charged that the infant was left in the van, in front of her mother's Felton home on Aug. 2, from 1 p.m. to approximately 5:40 p.m., when 911 dispatchers received a call for emergency help. During that time, investigators believe, the vehicle's windows and doors were closed and temperatures may have reached 120 degrees.

In deciding to prosecute Herrero, Danner said he had to consider several scenarios.

"At the one end of the spectrum," he said, "inattention cou-

pled with wrong or false assumptions can produce negligence and tragic results such as this death on the part of any person or any parent. At the other end of the spectrum, gross or criminal negligence requires conduct which is more than ordinary negligence. It requires conduct which is aggravated or reckless and which is a departure from what would be conduct of a careful person under the circumstances and which amounts to not having a proper regard for human life."

"What this comes down to," Danner added, "is whether or not the actions of Laura Herrero are such that they were a result of a tragic lack of judgment or inattention or actions that amount to indifference which led to the death of Cedric Blan."

Danner said new information in the Blan case might prompt him to drop or change the charges now pending against Herrero.

"We always have the discretion, based on additional evidence, to resolve the case in a different manner than what is charged," he said. "It is important to note that we are receiving full and complete cooperation from Laura Herrero and her family and as a result are learning additional facts which may aid us in determining whether or not these charges could be proven beyond a reasonable doubt."