

# Infant left in van dies

## Child was under foster care

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FELTON — A 12-day-old boy was found dead outside a foster home Friday evening in Felton after he had apparently been left unattended in a hot van, Sheriff's detectives said.

The infant, whose name was not released, was strapped in a car seat and had been left unattended for up to two hours inside a van parked in the driveway of a house at 6838 Highway 9, Sgt. Jim Gray said. The high temperature Friday in Santa Cruz was 74.

Members of the family that runs the home found the infant unconscious and called for help around 6 p.m. The infant was later pronounced dead at Dominican Hospital.

The infant had been placed at the home by Child Protective Services within the past several days, Gray said. Detectives impounded the van and said a number of tests would be run today to reconstruct what led to the infant's death.

As detectives interviewed members of the family, one woman wept openly on the porch and hid

her face in her hands, while other family members were obviously upset.

Gray said no one was arrested in the death, but an investigation is continuing. The District Attorney's Office will review the case to determine whether charges should be filed.

The foster home is run by Winona and Jim Sherrick, a Felton couple who have cared for more than 400 children placed with them by CPS. According to a 1988 Sentinel article on the couple, they take children in on both emergency and long-term basis.

A family friend said the couple had adopted three of the children placed with them in the past and cared deeply for the children they took care of. The friend said the family was deeply upset over the death of the infant.

The circumstances of the death are unclear. Some family members told investigators the baby had been left in the van to sleep and had then been forgotten.

As many as seven young children were living at the house at the time of the death, investigators said.