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### **Quadriplegic drowns in group home**

Probe continues into the death of a man who was left unattended during his bath

By Anne Miller

Staff Writer

GLENVILLE - James Taylor was ready for a bath. The 41-year-old quadriplegic who couldn't move anything but his eyes was settled on a seat in the whirlpool tub at his Glenville group home.

But then the staff member about to wash him was called away for a minute. The faucet was off, but a submerged hose remained on. The water level rose, first to Taylor's mouth, then his nose and up over his head. When the staff member returned, he found Taylor, who also was mentally disabled, drowning in about 2 feet of water.

The staff person hit the emergency drain and began CPR. Someone called 911.

They were too late. Taylor was pronounced dead at Ellis Hospital in Schenectady at 8:13 p.m. Wednesday, an hour after dispatchers received the first emergency call from the home.

"The water was rising in a way the staff person didn't realize," said Linda Lahie, executive director of the Schenectady County ARC, which owns and runs the home.

Taylor has family in the area, Glenville police said, but authorities would not divulge any other information.

Police have turned the investigation over to the county district attorney's office, which will determine if there is enough evidence to prosecute criminal negligence or a similar charge.

Authorities said they had not heard of any incident like this one throughout the state. The Schenectady County ARC hasn't had any serious police calls or deaths in its 53-year history, according to police and agency staff.

The non-profit will investigate, too. And once law enforcement is done, the state's Office of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities also will investigate, said Deborah Sturm Rausch, the department's director of public relations.

About 135,000 New Yorkers fall under the protection of her department, Sturm Rausch said. Of those, 0.01 percent suffer serious injuries each year. Less than 1 percent, or fewer than 1,350, die in a year, but that includes natural causes, she said.

"Based on the statistics, it's rare," she said, of an incident like the Glenville drowning.

The department conducts surprise inspections at every group home in the state annually for recertification. A team visited Glenville on Aug. 2 and the home has its certification.

Eight people lived at the Spring Road residence, a home with white siding, gray trim and drawn shades that opened in 1993. Lahie said her agency has 15 group homes throughout the county, plus 30 apartments for the more independent, as well as transportation and other services countywide.

Three staff members were working a shift at the Spring Road house Wednesday night. The status of the workers is unclear pending the investigation.

State laws governing patient records prevent the release of the names of staff members on site that night, she said. Nor could she speak of how the death might affect the others who live in the home. They all suffer mental and physical disabilities, she said, and may not understand exactly what happened.

Lahie said her agency's investigation may finish as early as today.

"This is a tremendous blow for us," she said.