

Autopsy results awaited in 2 deaths

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By GENE WARNER, JAY REY AND MAKI
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Police are awaiting autopsy results before saying more about the deaths of two women whose bodies were discovered Friday -- one stuffed in a garbage tote on the East Side, the other beaten inside her West Side home.

The body of Akia Burnell, 28, was found Friday afternoon inside her Vermont Street home, and on Saturday police arrested her husband, Akhmed Burnell. Burnell, 32, was charged with first-degree assault but could face more serious charges, pending the results of his wife's autopsy, officials said.

In the other case, family members of Amanda L. Wienckowski said Saturday that they knew nothing more about the circumstances of her death. Wienckowski's body was discovered Friday morning in a garbage tote outside New Covenant United Church of Christ at Spring and Clinton streets. While no arrests have been made, authorities have been interviewing a man who lives across the street from the church and allegedly had a paid sexual encounter with the 20-year-old Lewiston woman before she was reported missing Dec. 7.

Meanwhile, Wienckowski's friends and family will gather for a vigil at 7 this evening in the church on Spring and Clinton streets.

In the Burnell case, authorities were called to the Vermont Street residence at 4:15 p.m. Friday regarding a possible overdose.

Akhmed Burnell was found at the house. He was taken to Erie County Medical Center for treatment. Inside the house, police found the body of his wife.

An investigation was conducted by Detective Sgt. James P. Lonergan and Detectives Mark J. Vaughn, James Lema, Reginald Minor and Scott R. Malec.

The husband and wife got into a violent altercation at their residence sometime between last Monday and Thursday, according to the arrest report.

Burnell -- 6 feet, 2 inches tall and weighing 270 pounds -- is accused of beating her in the head and body, then violently throwing her to the floor, according to police.

After Burnell was released from the hospital, he was charged with first-degree assault.

The "charges may be upgraded" pending the results of the autopsy and further investigation, Chief of Detectives Dennis J. Richards said.

Burnell was at the Erie County Holding Center on Saturday awaiting arraignment, scheduled for this morning. He also faced additional unrelated burglary and grand larceny charges on an outstanding indictment warrant.

e-mail: mbecker@buffnews.com and jrey@buffnews.com