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Sheriff-Coroner
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PRESS RELEASE

Woman Found Deceased in Home, Suspected Bear Encounter

Downieville, California — Sierra County Sheriff's deputies discovered a woman deceased in her residence, with evidence suggesting a subsequent encounter with a bear. The Sierra County Sheriff's Office and the California Department of Fish and Wildlife are actively investigating the circumstances surrounding this incident.

On November 8, 2023, deputies were requested to conduct a welfare check in Downieville. The requesting party indicated that Patrice Miller had not been seen or heard from in several days. Upon arrival at the residence, deputies forced entry into the home and discovered Patrice Miller, a 71-year-old resident of Downieville, deceased inside her home. Preliminary investigation indicates that she passed away prior to the bear's involvement.

The cause of death is still under investigation, and the sheriff's office is working with Fish and Wildlife to piece together the sequence of events leading up to this incident. It is believed that Patrice Miller passed away before a bear, possibly drawn by the scent or other factors, accessed the residence.

In response to this incident, Fish and Wildlife officials are working with the sheriff's office to ensure public safety and understand the bear's behavior. Residents in the vicinity of Downieville are advised to exercise caution and take necessary precautions to avoid potential encounters with all wildlife. Closing ground-level doors and windows at night, locking vehicles, and removing all outside food sources, including garbage, is highly recommended.

The Sierra County Sheriff's Office extends its deepest condolences to the family and friends of Patrice Miller during this difficult time. The loss of a community member is always a tragedy, and our thoughts are with those affected by this unfortunate event.

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