



Winter Haven Police Department
125 North Lake Silver Drive, Northwest
Winter Haven, Florida 33881

Telephone 863/291-5858
Fax 863/298-5217



*****FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE*****

CONTACT PERSON: Sergeant Jim Jones

SECONDARY CONTACT
Winter Haven Police Department

On Friday, March 28, 2008, detectives with the Winter Haven Police Department charged Herbert Lee Lauderdale, 26 of Lake Wales with the First Degree Murder of Emerito Velez, 41.

On March 22, Velez' body was found along the drive leading to The Rock Church at 2901 Lucerne Park Road by the pastor and another member of the church. Both Velez and Lauderdale were co-workers at Wal-Mart Distribution Center on Lucerne Park Road. In an extensive investigation by detectives, it was determined that both men met in the parking lot of the distribution center shortly after 3:30 am, then left together in Velez' vehicle. After arriving at the church, an altercation ensued.

During the altercation, Lauderdale cut Velez' throat seven times, fatally wounding him and leaving his body on the property of the church. It is believed that Lauderdale fled the property and later arrived back at the distribution center to retrieve his own vehicle, a 1996 silver Ford Taurus.

At approximately 4:38am, a silver Ford Taurus is observed pulling up to the gas pumps at the 7-11 1099 1st Street South in Winter Haven. At approximately 4:42am, this same vehicle is seen leaving the pumps. It is believed that Lauderdale then drives to his apartment at the Deluxe Inn in Lake Wales where he was staying. He then made contact with his wife, LaKirstan Davis, and tells her that he had gotten into a fight with a person that owed him some money. He stated that he wielded a knife and started "swinging" it and thought he had killed this person. He said that when this person stopped moving, he reached into his pockets and removed \$5.00.

Detectives are continuing with the investigation.

***** END OF MEDIA RELEASE *****