

Anchorage police are still searching for the mother of an infant found dead last week.

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Anchorage police are still trying to find the mother of an infant found dead outdoors downtown last week, emphasizing officers' care about her condition.

"We're concerned about her well-being at this point in time," Anchorage Police Department Capt. Amanda Fisher said.

According to a police statement, officers received reports shortly before 8 a.m. Friday about an infant found dead outside on the 200 block of Cordova Street. Fisher, the department's chief of detectives, said in a Tuesday interview that the discovery severely affected the people who reported it.

"It was first reported by a passerby who found the infant and was very upset by that," Fisher said. "So she started screaming, which caught the attention of another individual who was nearby who then came and placed the 911 call for her."

Fisher said the infant's body was taken to the state medical examiner's office. She declined to answer questions about what happened, including where exactly the baby was found and what condition the baby was in, citing pending results from the examination. Police currently classify their response to Cordova Street as a death investigation rather than a homicide investigation, Fisher said. In the meantime, officers are asking for public help in contacting the child's mother, who they say might have recently given birth.

"We don't know how the situation came to be and how she and the baby came to be in the situations that they were," Fisher said. "So it's very important that if anybody does have information that can help us to find her. We would love to be able to reach out to her, get in touch with her, see how she's doing, both medically, emotionally – all those things that go with that."

Fisher said Friday's infant death is the first such case the city has seen since 2013, when police said a newborn girl wrapped in a towel was found dead at Eagle River's Turner Park. The mother, then-Army Spc. Ashley Ard, was charged with second-degree murder.

The Anchorage Daily News reported that Ard later pleaded guilty to manslaughter charges. At her 2018 sentencing to nine years in her daughter's death, according to Alaska's News Source, Ard told the court, "I think about her every single day."

Fisher said Anchorage has resources for mothers who need to give up newborns. The state Safe Surrender of Infants Act allows people to surrender infants less than 21 days old to peace officers, firefighters and doctors among others.

"Something so simple as calling 911 and having police respond, or taking them to the place like a hospital, something along those lines, those are all different options that someone in a situation finding themselves distressed might be able to utilize," she said.

Anchorage Fire Department spokeswoman Lexi Trainer said Tuesday that local fire stations don't have heated "safe surrender" boxes for infants, but staff have been hoping to add them ever since the Ard case.

"We have been at a standstill for two years in the process," Trainer said in an email. "We're hoping this incident helps us finally get some."

Police are asking anyone with information about Friday's incident, as well as surveillance video from the area, to call 311.