

Woman stabs fiance to death hours before wedding, Whitehall Township police say - UPDATE

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By [Kathryn Brenzel](#) | [The Express-Times](#)

Hours before the couple were to become man and wife, the groom was pronounced dead and his fiancée was taken to prison.

Billy Rafael Brewster, 36, died early this morning after his soon-to-be wife, **Na Cola Darcel Franklin**, 31, stabbed him on the second-floor landing of his [Whitehall Township](#) apartment building, according to police and the Lehigh County Coroner's Office.

Brewster's heart was punctured by two stab wounds, authorities said. The couple were scheduled to be married this morning.

Family members arrived at the apartment in suits and dresses this afternoon. Brewster's mother declined to comment. A neighbor said the pastor for the wedding tried to reach the couple all morning, and eventually came to the apartment.

"I was really shocked. It made me sick to my stomach," said Sara Arnold, another neighbor who lives in the apartment across the hall from the couple. "I didn't think there were any issues there." A large blood stain was still visible this afternoon at the top of the stairs of the split-level apartment complex. The door to the couple's apartment was closed.

Neighbors in the surrounding three apartments said Brewster and Franklin lived with three children in the apartment for about a year. They couldn't recall any previous incidents at the apartment. The couple's relationship with their neighbors was cordial, neighbors said, but didn't progress beyond friendly encounters on the landing outside their apartments.

"She seemed very nice," Arnold said of Franklin. "I never thought there were any problems there." Arnold and roommate Tim Smith said they didn't hear anything during the stabbing, but were startled awake by the doorbell about 5 a.m. They opened their door and saw police outside, wearing gloves and holding what appeared to be an evidence bag. Police didn't leave until about 1 p.m., Arnold said.

Authorities responded to a 2:19 a.m. call in the 1000 block of Olympic Circle North, and found Brewster bleeding from his chest, according to reports. He was taken to Lehigh Valley Hospital in Salisbury Township and was pronounced dead at 3:24 a.m.

Deputy Coroner Paul Hoffman said the cause of death was a stab wound to the body and the manner was ruled a homicide.

District Attorney Jim Martin would not comment on a motive or the type of knife used in the stabbing.

"I'm not going to get into the details," he said. "It's part of the ongoing investigation."

Franklin is being held in the Lehigh County Prison without bail on one count of criminal homicide, according to authorities.

Outside the apartment complex this afternoon, children played in the nearby public pool. A playground and tennis court between the building and pool were unoccupied.

Neighbor Steven Engel, who has lived in his apartment for 20 years, woke up this morning and saw five or six police cars outside the apartment building. He and his wife didn't hear any of what transpired across the hall.

"Both my wife and I are shocked and surprised," he said. "Sad part is, they were supposed to be married today."

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