

PURDUE
UNIVERSITY

News

OTHER LINKS

► [News Archive \(searchable\)](#) ► [Recent releases](#) ► [News Service home page](#)

March 20, 2007

Body identified as missing Purdue student Wade Steffey

WEST LAFAYETTE, Ind. - A body found Monday (March 19) on the Purdue campus has been identified as that of missing university freshman Wade Steffey, according to university officials and the Tippecanoe County Coroner's Office.

Purdue spokesperson Jeanne Norberg said Tuesday (March 20) that Steffey, who hadn't been seen since Jan. 13, was electrocuted. His body was found around noon Monday (March 19) in a high-voltage utility room in Owen Hall by a university physical facilities employee who was called to check on a noise coming from the locked room.



Wade Steffey
[Download photo](#)

"Wade apparently gained access, and, in trying to find his way around the room, was accidentally electrocuted," Deputy Coroner Martin Avolt said. "Because of the voltage involved, he would have been killed instantly."

Norberg said the utility room, roughly the size of a one-car garage, houses three electrical transformers connected by high-voltage wires. Steffey's body was found behind one of the transformers, she said. The utility room has both an interior and exterior door.

When the utility worker was called to check the room on Monday (March 19), she entered using the interior door, which had been locked. During the course of their investigation, police found the outside door was unlocked. Police removed the lock to determine if it had been tampered with or faulty and padlocked the door for safety.

"The location of Wade's body inside the room would have made it difficult for anyone to see him from any of the doorways," Norberg said. "It seems likely that Wade somehow entered the room sometime shortly after he was last seen thinking that it was a way to gain entrance to the

residence hall. The utility room would have been dark, and he apparently tripped over high-voltage lines that connect the three transformers as he was trying to find his way out."

The room is about 50 yards from the northwest corner of Owen Hall, where Steffey was reportedly seen at around 12:30 a.m. on Jan. 13. Investigators said he had left his coat with a friend who lives at the residence hall. At about the same time, he placed two cell phone calls to friends in Owen Hall, a short walk away from his room in Cary Quadrangle. Earlier on the evening of Jan. 12 Steffey attended a party in the Tower Drive area.

"Our entire campus community, along with Wade's family, friends and volunteers, have put so much effort into finding Wade and bringing him home," Norberg said. "While this ends the search for Wade, our search for answers continues. We offer our condolences and our continued support for his family."

An independent investigation also will be conducted, she said.

Norberg said an earlier campus search for Steffey included the Owen Hall complex. She said residence hall employees did not have keys to the room, which was normally locked as it was on the day of the search.

It is believed that physical facilities employees subsequently checked the room but did not see Steffey's body behind the transformer, Norberg said. She said workers would have been forced to shut off power to all of Owen Hall in order to completely search the high-voltage room.

Steffey, 19, of Bloomington, Ind., was a National Merit Scholar majoring in aviation technology. He was reported missing on Jan. 16 when his roommate returned to campus after the Martin Luther King holiday break.

Source: Jeanne Norberg, (765) 494-2084, jnorberg@purdue.edu

Purdue News Service: (765) 494-2096; purduenews@purdue.edu

To the [News Service](#) home page