

Deadly Penn State Frat Party Captured On Video, Police Say

It was 9 p.m. on Feb. 2 at the Beta Theta Pi fraternity house. About a dozen students gathered for a pledge party. One would not survive.

By Kara Seymour (Patch National Staff)

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Surveillance video captured a hazing ritual at a Penn State University fraternity house where a New Jersey teen died after suffering a collapsed lung, ruptured spleen and nonrecoverable brain injury following a fall, according to a report on philly.com.

Timothy Piazza, a 19-year-old from Readington Township in Hunterdon County, died on Feb. 4 following a fall down a set of basement stairs at the Alpha Upsilon chapter house of the Beta Theta Pi on the State College, Pa., campus, where he was pledging on the night of Feb. 2.

After his fall, Piazza was moved almost immediately, but an ambulance was not called until almost 12 hours later. He died after having been treated at a local hospital and flown to a medical center in Hershey, Pa.

"What we know is that this was a hazing ritual and it involved the gross misuse of alcohol," Damon Sims, Penn State's vice president for student affairs, told philly.com on Monday. "These men were made to ingest enormous amounts of alcohol. ... To my knowledge, this is the first time that has happened in a chapter house where there was a sophisticated surveillance system."

The results of an investigation into Piazza's death by the Centre County District Attorney's office and State College Police is expected to be announced by mid-April, it was previously reported.

Several hundred attended a candlelight vigil on Feb. 12, 2017, for Timothy Piazza, a New Jersey native and Penn State sophomore, who died after a fall at a fraternity house earlier this month.

The fraternity, which had been suspended for a year in 2009 for alcohol violations for serving minors, had reformed in 2010 as a dry house where no alcohol was to be served. Security cameras were installed throughout the fraternity as part of an extensive renovation project.

The video has not been seen by Jim and Evelyn Piazza, Timothy's parents, or their Philadelphia-based attorney, Tom Kline, philly.com reported. They have been told it shows Timothy getting off a couch and appearing to try to find a door before returning to the couch, it was reported.

"This is going to be the next Penn State tragedy, this whole frat system and their lack of policing it," Kline told philly.com. "There's every indication that this was a brutal horrible, hazing incident, the likes of which should never be allowed on a campus of an American university."

Kline, a personal injury lawyer, got a multimillion-dollar settlement from Penn State for one of the victims of former assistant football coach Jerry Sandusky, according to his website.

Penn State announced at the end of March that new rules implemented by the university limit each fraternity and sorority to 10 parties where alcohol is served per semester. Only wine and

beer can be served at those parties, state-certified bartenders need to be used and no kegs are allowed.

This decision followed the university announcing it will develop an "aggressive timeline" to address "growing allegations of misconduct in these organizations, including hazing and sexual assault," promising "significant changes in social policies and practices for these groups."

Penn State has an active Greek life, with at least 89 fraternity and sorority chapters at its University Park campus alone.

In March of 2015, following revelations of a secret Facebook page maintained by the Kappa Delta Rho chapter that contained nude photos of unconscious women, Penn State President Eric Barron said he would head up a new task force looking into Greek life.

In February of 2016, six months after the launch of the task force, there had been meetings, the creation of subcommittees and a "report card" for fraternities and sororities to use to "make improvements," the campus newspaper, The Daily Collegian, reported. It was the last time any announcement about the task force was made.

The campus newspaper reported, however, that not much changed as a result of the task force.

"For a while there, this was the big hot topic. Now we've moved on to something else," Lt. Keith Robb of the State College Police Department told the newspaper in 2016. "I'm sure it hasn't stopped (at fraternities). We're just not looking at it anymore. The media isn't looking at it anymore, but it's always there."