

Sheriff



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October 11, 2011

WOMAN WAITS 3 HOURS TO SEEK MEDICAL CARE FOR BURNED TODDLER



The Okaloosa County Sheriff's Office has charged a Fort Walton Beach resident with child neglect causing great harm after she waited more than three hours to take a burned toddler to the hospital for treatment.

Deputies were called to the Fort Walton Beach Medical Center on June 27th, 2011 in connection to a 15-month old that came in with third degree burns to his right foot.

A joint investigation was conducted with the Florida Department of Children & Families. The investigation revealed that after the toddler was burned around 2:45 p.m., 22-year old Amber Leard of 703 Green Street called her boyfriend. Deputies say Leard had a car but did not take the baby for immediate medical care or call 9-1-1. She instead took the child by her mother's home, where her mother told her to take him to the hospital. The estimated time that elapsed before the toddler arrived at the hospital was three hours fifteen minutes.

During an interview with Sheriff's investigators, Leard told them she was raking leaves when she heard a "woosh" sound and turned around to see the child's leg on fire. She says she threw leaves on the toddler to put out the blaze. Leard later told investigators she saw a cigarette being tossed over the fence into a gas puddle near where the child was playing - and that caused the fire. Materials were collected and sent to a lab for testing.

A witness who helped with the fire told deputies he was playing basketball with a friend when they saw black smoke and heard a baby crying. They ran next door and saw the baby on fire sitting in a pile of leaves. One witness picked up the baby and put out the fire on his leg. Leard then took the toddler into the house.

Investigators collected evidence at the scene, including a cigarette butt in the pile of leaves and the baby's clothes for processing. They also worked to obtain medical records.

Leard was picked up on an active warrant October 4th.

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