

Florida carries out its sixth execution of 2014

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The state of Florida executed Eddie Wayne Davis on Thursday, July 10. His execution was the sixth in the state this year and the 24th carried out nationwide.

Davis, 45, was convicted in 1995 for first-degree murder in the death of 11-year-old Kimberly Waters, whose mother briefly dated him. Davis abducted the young girl from her home while her mother was working a double shift at a nursing home. He raped and beat her, then threw her body into a commercial trash bin.

Davis died by lethal injection Thursday evening at the Florida State Prison in Raiford. After being injected with the first drug of a three-drug protocol, Davis reportedly began muttering to himself, though witnesses in the viewing area could not hear what he said because the intercom speakers were turned off.

For the next five minutes, his chest heaved up and down before his body went still. Davis was pronounced dead at 6:43 p.m. local time.

On July 7, the Florida Supreme Court rejected Davis's claim that a metabolic blood disorder known as porphyria might cause him to have a painful reaction to the first drug used in lethal injection, the sedative midazolam hydrochloride. According to Florida's protocol, midazolam is intended to induce unconsciousness, followed by vecuronium bromide, which causes paralysis, and finally potassium chloride to induce cardiac arrest.

The death penalty still exists in 32 of the 50 US states, although only ten of these states have carried out executions in recent years. These states have scrambled to find lethal injection drugs to keep their killing machines going after the European Union issued a ban on the export of drugs to be used in lethal injections in the US. Most states have refused to reveal the US sources of the drugs that are now being used in lethal injections.

Florida utilizes the same three drugs for executions as

those used in Oklahoma, although it uses a larger dosage of midazolam. On April 29, Oklahoma death row inmate Clayton Lockett, 38, was subjected to a grisly lethal injection procedure. Some 51 minutes after being strapped to the gurney, he was injected in the groin with the three-drug lethal cocktail.

Within minutes of the first injection, Lockett began twitching violently and the curtains were drawn to obscure the view of witnesses and the execution was then reportedly called off. Reporters were told three-quarters of an hour later that Lockett had subsequently died of a massive heart attack. It was later officially confirmed that Lockett was also tasered after refusing to leave his cell to walk to the execution chamber.

Following Lockett's execution, Oklahoma authorities called off the lethal injection of Charles Warner, which was supposed to take place several hours after Lockett's. The state has temporarily halted executions while it reviews its lethal injection protocol.

In another horrific execution on January 16, Ohio death row inmate Dennis McGuire, 53, writhed in pain before being pronounced dead 25 minutes after an untested lethal cocktail of two drugs, midazolam and hydromorphone, was injected. McGuire's family members watched in horror as the deadly chemicals were injected into his veins. An official determination of Ohio officials contends that McGuire felt no pain.

Death row inmates in three states have taken legal action to stop authorities from using the multi-drug protocols that have resulted in gruesome executions such as those of McGuire and Lockett. In Arizona, six death row inmates have filed a lawsuit alleging the state's two-drug combination amounts to human experimentation.

In Oklahoma, 21 condemned prisoners have filed suit against state officials, arguing that the three-drug method used to execute Lockett risks "severe pain, needless suffering and a lingering death." The

Guardian reports that the lawsuit alleges “a real and immediate threat that [Oklahoma authorities] will attempt to execute the plaintiffs using the same drugs and procedures used in the attempted execution of Clayton Lockett, or with similarly untried, untested and unsound drugs and procedures.”

“According to the lawsuit,” the *Guardian* writes, “other problems occurred during the [Oklahoma] state killings of Robyn L. Parks [executed 3/10/1992], who gasped and gagged, Scott D. Carpenter [5/8/1997], who gasped, shook and made a guttural sound, Loyd W. LaFevers [1/30/2001], who raised up his head and gasped, and Michael L Wilson [1/9/2014], who said he felt his body burning.”

In Arizona, a federal judge has rejected a bid to postpone the July 23 lethal injection of Joseph Wood, who contends that secrecy surrounding the state’s lethal injection protocol violates his 1st Amendment rights. Wood’s effort to stop his execution came as part of a civil rights complaint he filed along with five other Arizona death row inmates last month. US District Judge Neil V. Wake ruled that Wood’s 1st Amendment claims were invalid.

Wood was seeking more detailed information on the procedure to be used to put him to death, including the drug manufacturers and sources, information about the qualifications of the personnel of his execution team, and documents detailing how Arizona developed its lethal injection protocol.

Wood’s attorney Dale Baich stated, “By deliberately concealing necessary information from Mr. Wood, the Arizona Department of Corrections is violating the public’s 1st Amendment right to be informed about the manner in which the state plans to carry out the most serious penalty available in the criminal justice system.”



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