

Desert Hot Springs Police Officer's Hearing Ends In Trip To Hospital

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DESERT HOT SPRINGS, Calif. -- "We're just really stressed out at the thought of what could happen to him," said Officer Tapia's wife Jennifer Tapia.

The suspension that may result from the hearing didn't compare to what actually happened to Officer Tapia. The hearing started at city hall at 9:30 Tuesday morning. Around 10:00, Tapia's wife received a phone call to go inside.

Just minutes later, medics carried Tapia out of the hearing on a stretcher and took him away in an ambulance. This, less than 20 minutes after his wife told News Channel 3 he had been having trouble breathing from all the stress.

"I'm just very worried for him that this could go in the wrong direction for him, and that he'll have to fight to get his job back," Jennifer Tapia said.

Paul Tapia's attorney, John Bakhit, said this incident happened after the hearing. Tapia is under fire for his actions after last year's controversial toy drive.

Councilman Russel Betts sent us the following statement: "I know Officer Tapia to be a good and dedicated officer of our police department who has been under considerable stress over the Police Association contract negotiations, and then concerns over his job."

We saw city manager Rick Daniels and asked him to talk with us. His response was, "I don't have anything to say."

"It seems like here in Desert Hot Springs, management doesn't work with the union and I think that's what's brought about these problems," Jennifer Tapia said.

Bakhit said the decision to suspend Tapia is in Chief Williams' hands. Chief Williams could give him a lesser discipline, or forget the whole thing.

"He's been trying to be strong, but again, it's his reputation on the line. It's kind of a helpless situation. There's nothing we can do but wait to see what their decision is," Jennifer Tapia said. No word on what exactly happened to Tapia, but his wife told us he is feeling better and just resting.