



## BRAD THURMAN, SHERIFF

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PRESS RELEASE 2  
A25-29565 HOMICIDE INVESTIGATION  
DECEMBER 23, 2025

At 1853 hours of December 16, 2025, Cowlitz 911 received a report of suspicious circumstances in the 3600 block of Old Lewis River Rd, Woodland. The reporting party stated they had just spoken with a family member, identified as Ricky Dean Miller, age 67, who reportedly said he had killed someone. Miller resides at the Old Lewis River Rd address and reportedly said that the victim's body was hidden on his property.

Deputies with the Cowlitz County Sheriff's Office responded to the scene and contacted Miller. Detectives obtained a search warrant for Miller's property and located a deceased male subject, identified as 71-year-old Dennis Eugene Schmitt. Schmitt's body had been hidden inside a barrel on the property. Miller was reportedly Schmitt's landlord, with the two parties living in separate residences on Miller's property.

An autopsy was conducted on December 19, 2025. Forensic examination determined Schmitt had multiple blunt-force injuries to the head and evidence of strangulation.

Ricky Miller was booked into Cowlitz County Jail on charges of Murder 2<sup>nd</sup> Degree and Unlawful Disposal of Human Remains. The Sheriff's Office requests anyone with information about this case to contact Detective James Hanberry at 360-577-3092.

Troy Brightbill  
Chief Criminal Deputy  
Cowlitz County Sheriff's Office