

Ferguson-area churches, other cities, prepare for reaction to grand jury report on police officer

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([The Christian Science Monitor](#)) As the nation waits to learn the legal fate of Officer Darren Wilson—whether or not a grand jury will recommend charges against him in the shooting death of black teenager Michael Brown—schools and churches in the area are preparing for any reaction to the report.

The latest news, published Friday night by the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, provides new details about the brief violent encounter as well as video showing Officer Wilson at Ferguson police headquarters not long after that.

“The Aug. 9 fatal shooting here that sparked three months of protests and calls for change from around the world happened in less than 90 seconds, interviews and an analysis of police and EMS records shows,” the *Post-Dispatch* reported. “The records, obtained by the Post-Dispatch via Missouri’s Sunshine Law, provide the best timeline yet for the events surrounding the shooting of Michael Brown Jr., 18. Also released were police station surveillance videos that provide the most recent images of Ferguson Police Officer Darren Wilson, who has stayed out of the public eye since the shooting. Wilson left the police station for the hospital two hours after the shooting, accompanied by other officers and his union lawyer. They returned about two and one-half hours later.”

The timeline gives a clear sense of the urgency radioed by Wilson, officers in other patrol vehicles, and dispatchers at Ferguson police headquarters.

In the last reported dispatch, an officer called over his radio: “Get us several more units over here. There’s gonna be a problem.”

The “problem,” of course played out over the following weeks as the nation pondered yet another instance of a white police officer shooting a young black man, protests and riots followed, and questions were raised about such broader issues as

the militarization of police forces around the country.

A key consideration by grand jurors may be the report from Wilson's hospital visit. His supporters say Mr. Brown punched and scratched the officer as they fought in the patrol car, supposedly over Wilson's handgun, which was fired twice in the car, hitting Brown once in the hand.

That initial encounter left Brown's blood on Wilson's uniform shirt. In the video, he can be seen wearing a white T-shirt. The quality of the video makes it impossible to see any injuries he may have had.

Meanwhile, a coalition of 11 churches, mostly in and near Ferguson, announced a partnership Friday with two school districts to provide support for children and their families after the grand jury announcement, KMBC in Kansas City reports.

The churches will offer food, education and counseling. The Ferguson-Florissant and Riverview Gardens school districts will provide the food, and will help staff the churches with volunteers.

"We recognize the need to feed bodies but we also want to comfort troubled hearts and minds," Steve Lawler of St. Stephen's Episcopal Church in Ferguson told KMBC.

Around the country, police departments and other local agencies are preparing too. For some cities, a decision in the racially charged case will, inevitably, reignite long-simmering debates over local police relations with minority communities.

"It's definitely on our radar," said Lt. Michael McCarthy, police spokesman in Boston, where police leaders met privately Wednesday to discuss preparations. "Common sense tells you the timeline is getting close. We're just trying to prepare in case something does step off, so we are ready to go with it."

In Los Angeles, rocked by riots in 1992 after the acquittal of white police officers in the videotaped beating of black motorist Rodney King, police officials say they've been in touch with their counterparts in Missouri, where Gov. Jay Nixon and St. Louis-area law enforcement held a news conference this week on their own preparations.

"Naturally, we always pay attention," said Cmdr. Andrew Smith, a police spokesman. "We saw what happened when there were protests over there and how oftentimes protests spill from one part of the country to another."

In Las Vegas, police joined pastors and other community leaders this week to call for restraint at a rally tentatively planned northwest of the casino strip when a decision comes.

And in Berkeley, Missouri, a town neighboring Ferguson, officials this week passed out fliers urging residents to be prepared for unrest just as they would a major storm—with plenty of food, water and medicine in case they're unable to leave home for several days.

In Boston, a group called "Black Lives Matter," which also has chapters in other major cities, is organizing a rally in front of the police district office in the Roxbury neighborhood the day after an indictment decision.

*This report includes material from the Associated Press.*