

June 16, 2008

## Man with machete robs store

*Dale Neal*

Asheville police are searching for a man with a machete who robbed a Patton Avenue drug store Sunday, getting away with a bag of narcotic drugs.

A Latino man with a machete concealed under his clothing entered the Kerr Drug pharmacy at 1124 Patton Ave. around 10 a.m., according to Capt. Tim Splain of the Asheville Police Department.

The man threatened the pharmacist and pharmacy technician with a machete. The suspect forced the pharmacy technician to sit on the floor while he instructed the pharmacist to open the drug safe and remove an undetermined amount of OxyContin and oxycodone, a potent painkiller. The suspect brought a plastic bag with him, which the pharmacist filled with the drugs.

Splain said the man grew impatient and said, "That's enough." He took the bag and exited the store. The robbery only took minutes.

"Unfortunately, the people up front didn't realize the pharmacy was being robbed," Splain said. The machete was about a foot long.

The Buncombe County Sheriff's Department assisted with a K-9 track, but the dog was unable to pick up a suspect track or direction the man might have gone. Splain said the armed robbery targeting drugs was unusual. "Most of the pharmacy robberies we see are when people try to break in a store after hours."

The suspect is described as a Latino male, about 5-feet-5-inches tall, 150 pounds, with black hair, light facial hair, wearing a loose-fitting red or maroon T-shirt with no writing on it, blue jeans and tennis shoes. The victim spoke clear English with a Spanish accent.

Anyone with information is urged to call the APD at 252-1110 or CrimeStoppers at 255-5050.

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