

THE DENVER POST

Coverage from July 20 to July 24, 2012

AURORA SHOOTINGS



RJ Sangosti, The Denver Post

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THE DENVER POST STAFF

AURORA THEATER SHOOTINGS. THE MAIN STORY

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WEEKLY AD SPECIALS FROM THE DENVER POST

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Aurora theater: 50 shot, 12 dead



37 MIN. AGO - About 50 people were shot 12 fatally early Friday when shots rang out at an Aurora movie theater during a premiere showing of the new Batman movie. A

dp BREAKING NEWS AFWonline.com

Police search apartment of suspected gunman

39 MIN. AGO - Police are searching an apartment building in north Aurora after following a shooting at a movie theater left 12 people dead.

- ♦ Red carpet premiere of "Dark Knight" canceled after shootings 17 min. ago
- ♦ NYC mayor: Obama, Romney should address gun issue 23 min. ago
- ♦ Homeland security boss Napolitano saddened by shootings 25 min. ago
- ♦ Map: Aurora theater shooting, suspect's apartment, hospitals 12 min. ago

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Witness: Gunman in black entered Aurora theater, opened fire

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Ballfields at Englewood's Cornerstone Park to get a

SCREENSHOT OF DENVERPOST.COM HOMEPAGE ABOUT 5 A.M.

Unknown number of people shot at Aurora movie theater

EVOLUTION OF A STORY: The first post was at 2:42:17 a.m., July 20, 2012. Story would update 36 times before appearing in print.

By The Denver Post staff

An unknown number of people were injured early Friday when shots rang out at an Aurora movie theater during a premiere showing of the new Batman movie.

Sometime after 1 a.m., police received reports of gunshots at the Century 16 Movie Theaters at the Aurora Town Center.

No confirmed information is available on how many people were injured and whether there were any fatalities.

Dozens of ambulances and police vehicles were outside the mall, where

the theater was showing “The Dark Knight Rises.”

A witness, Benjamin Fernandez, 30, said he was watching the movie when he heard a series of explosions. He said that people ran from the theater and there were gunshots as police shouted ‘get down!’

He says he saw people falling, including one young girl.

A witness said that he was watching the Police had set up a command post near the Dillards and were interviewing hundreds of possible witnesses.

Police spokeswoman Cassidee Carlson says “the scene is still very active and we have little information for release at this time.”

Swedish Medical Center spokeswoman Nicole Williams says two people injured at the theater have arrived at the hospital in critical condition.

She says emergency workers have said there could be several more patients.

71 shot, 12 killed at Aurora movie theater

EVOLUTION OF A STORY: This post, at 12:34:28 p.m., was the 19th update of the day. The story would go through 36 versions online.

By Ryan Parker,
Kurtis A. Lee,
Jordan Steffen
and Jennifer Brown

AURORA — A gunman burst into the emergency exit door of a theater and shot 71 people, killing at least 12 of them, at a midnight premiere of the new Batman movie Friday, creating a chaotic, smoke-filled scene that had bloody moviegoers dragging each other outside.

“It was like something out of a movie,” said Jacob King, who was standing in the lobby when someone carried out the motionless body of a young girl, covered in blood. “You don’t want to believe it’s real, but it is.”

The moviegoer handed the child’s body to a police officer, who put her in the back of his squad car and sped away.

The 24-year-old suspect, later identified as James Holmes of Aurora, stormed into the theater with three guns and two gas canisters that clouded the room and stung people’s eyes and throats.

Police arrested Holmes minutes after arriving at the movie theater, and he remains in custody. Holmes surrendered to officers behind the theater near a white Hyundai.

Officers say three weapons were used – a shotgun, an assault rifle and a handgun. A second handgun was in his car, but police don’t know if it was

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WEEKLY AD SPECIALS FROM THE DENVER POST [Ad Icons]

12 dead, 58 injured in theater shooting

Aurora Shooting - The Witnesses Speak

dp BREAKING NEWS Colorado Rockies honor theater shooting victims with black wristbands

07/20 8:38 PM - In the wake of Friday's theater shootings in Aurora, the Rockies wore black wristbands against the Padres to honor those affected by the tragedy.

- Booby-trapped apartment where alleged Aurora theater shooter lived vexes cops - 7/20 8:44 PM
- Theater shooting in Aurora could lead to increased security in cinemas - 7/20 7:35 PM
- Interactive timeline: The worst mass shootings in U.S. history - 7/20 8:08 PM
- Cops' swarm of theater after shooting signals change in tactics - 7/20 7:49 PM

07/20 8:39 PM Aurora Police Chief Dan Oates said Friday evening that the last of the 10 bodies in the Century 16 movie complex in Aurora Town Center were removed by 5 p.m. and police hope to have identifications of the victims within the next couple of hours.

- Live blog: Updated social media coverage
- Slide show: More images from the scene in Aurora
- Map: Shooting scene, hospitals, suspect's apartment
- Timeline: Shooting at Aurora movie theater
- Timeline: Mass shootings in U.S. history

Police: Shooting suspect's apartment "booby trapped"

07/20 4:01 PM - Police say that apartment of the suspect in an early morning movie theater shooting appears to be booby trapped with trip wires attached to plastic bottles that contain an unknown substance.

Aspiring sportscaster among theater victims

Neighborhood news from **YourHub**

Ballfields at Englewood's Cornerstone Park to get a makeover

Shelters, a playground and paving the parking lot among upgrades aimed at improving spectator experience

SCREENSHOT OF DENVERPOST.COM HOMEPAGE ABOUT 8:40 P.M.

used in the attack.

Holmes was wearing “full ballistic gear,” including a vest, a helmet, a gas mask and other body armor during the shooting.

Two devices were set off during the shooting.

Police found Holmes’ north Aurora apartment booby-trapped, the same song playing on repeat on his stereo. The apartment complex has been evacuated.

Ten people died at the scene, and two others died at hospitals. Many of others who were shot were critically injured.

One of the victims died at Children’s Hospital in Aurora, but officials there would not say whether it was a child or an adult. The other five patients survived, including one who is in critical condition with buckshot



injuries to the back.

Two of the victims at Children’s were hit with a high-velocity rifle, perhaps from 60 to 80 feet away, said emergency-room physician Dr. Guy Upshaw.

Police received multiple calls about the shooting beginning at 12:39 a.m. and arrived minutes later at the theater complex, 14300 E. Alameda Ave.

Police say the suspect “appeared” at the front of one of the theaters showing “The Dark Knight Rises.” Witnesses told The Post he entered through an emergency exit at the right front of the Theater 9 less than 10 minutes into the film.

The suspect then threw some type of explosive and started shooting into the packed theater. The man had a rifle, a handgun and a gas mask when police arrested him. A shotgun was left in the theater.

Police have no evidence that there are any additional suspects involved in the shooting.

The bodies of the 10 people who died at the theater remain at the scene while police continue to investigate.

Tom Sullivan embraces his wife, Terry, left, and daughter Megan outside Gateway High School in Aurora on Friday. At the time, the family hadn’t heard any news about the fate of son Alex, who was at the movie theater where dozens of people were shot during a midnight screening of “The Dark Knight Rises.” Friday night, the family learned that Alex, who turned 27 that day, was one of the 12 who died. *RJ Sangosti, The Denver Post*

Josh Kelly, 28, was watching the movie with his girlfriend of about four years. He lost her in the chaos.

Josh called his father, Robert Kelly, from the theater and said: "I can't find my girl." In the mayhem, the darkness and the smoke, and people panicking and trampling one another, he "just lost track and he couldn't see," the elder Kelly said. "My son is freaked out."

Robert Kelly rushed to the theater after his son's call, and found him outside covered in blood. His girlfriend was among the fatalities. Now he is home and sedated, under a nurse's care.

Outside the back exit of the theater, FBI agents have placed yellow tape and numbered evidence markers on objects in the parking lot, including a gas mask. A bloody jacket and spilled popcorn were on the pavement.

Authorities also searched a white car parked behind the movie theater, removing what appeared to be a combat helmet, a duffel bag, an ammunition clip and a vest.

After his arrest, the suspect made a statement about possible explosives in his residence.

Police have blocked off a three-block area around an apartment complex in north Aurora. Residents in the area said they were evacuated around 2 a.m. while police searched the third floor of the apartment building.

The University of Colorado confirmed that Holmes was in the process of withdrawing from the university's graduate program in neurosciences. Holmes enrolled at the university in June 2011.

Jackie Mitchell said he had drinks with Holmes a few nights ago at the Zephyr Lounge. Mitchell said the two talked about football.

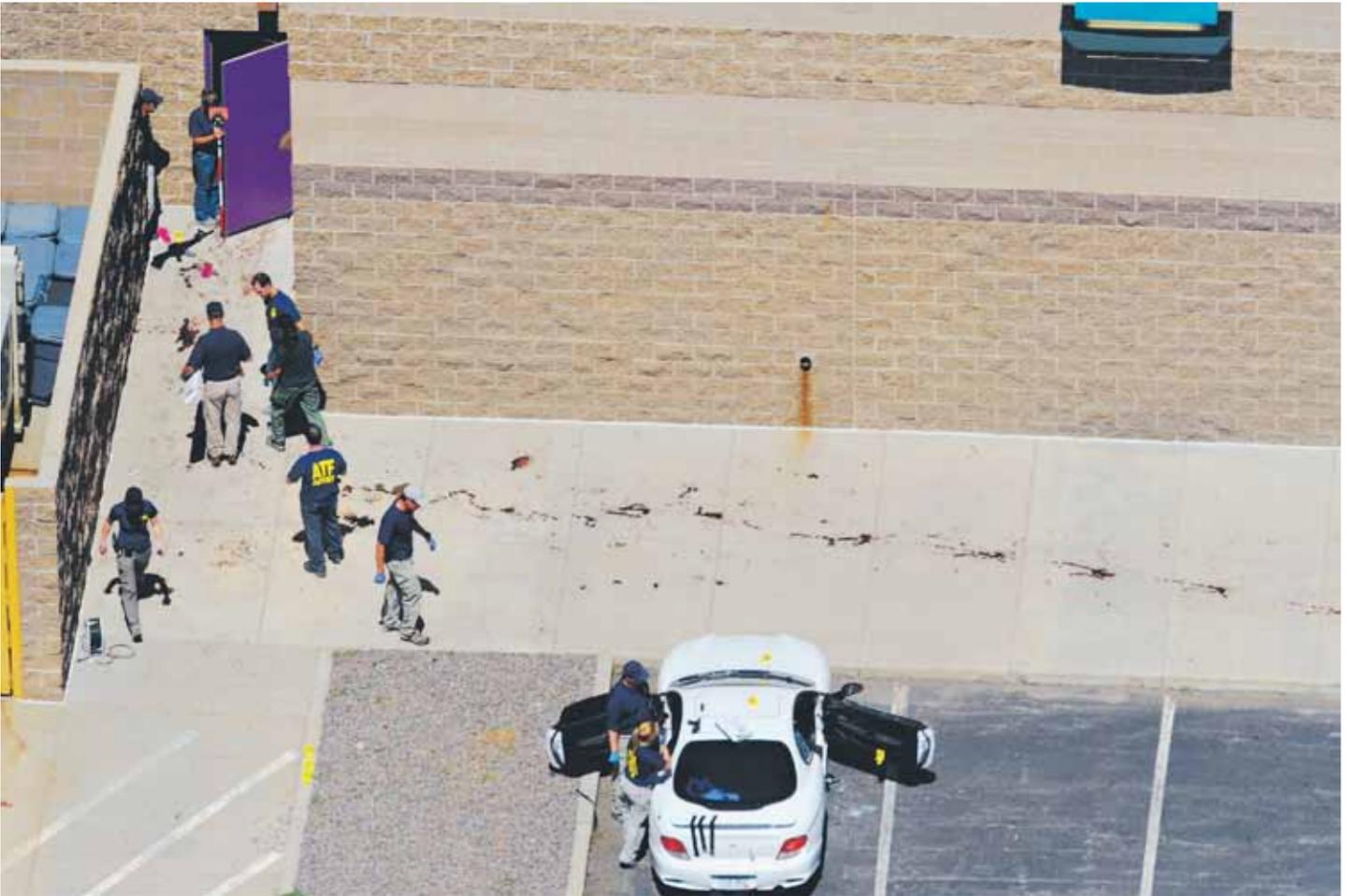
Holmes was "geeky" and had a "swagger" to him, Mitchell said.

"He just didn't seem the type to go into a movie theater and shoot it up," Mitchell said. "He seemed like a real smart dude."

Police from all over the metro area were called to the scene.

Corbin Dates and Jennifer Seeger were sitting in the second row of the theater when Dates saw someone in the front row answer a phone call during the opening credits and walk to the emergency door in the front of the theater.

Less than an hour later, a man, dressed in black and wearing a gas mask and what looked like body armor, entered through the same emergency



exit. He lobbed two canisters, and almost instantly the theater filled with smoke.

Dates and Seeger, like others in the theater, thought the man and the smoke were all part of the show, they said. Right as their eyes began to tear up from the smoke, the man fired a shot at the ceiling.

The gunman moved through the crowd and stopped in front of Seeger.

He pointed a long rifle at her face and said nothing.

He shot at the person sitting behind her, Seeger said.

“I have no idea why he didn’t shoot me,” Seeger said.

The two dived to the ground. They could feel hot shell casings hitting their legs as they tried to crawl through the dark theater now filled with smoke. Seeger’s forehead has a burn from one of the casings.

Her friends urged each other and the people around them to stay quiet, desperate not to draw the attention of the gunman who was working his way up the aisle.

As she huddled on the ground, Seeger could see bodies of women and

James Holmes’s car was found in the back of the theater. Police found a combat helmet, duffel bag, an ammunition magazine, a vest and a Glock handgun. *Helen H. Richardson, The Denver Post*

children lying around her.

Seeger, who has some EMT training, tried to help a man bleeding next to her. She worked to find a pulse but was forced to leave him behind as they tried to flee the theater.

People tried to exit through the main entrance of the theater, Seeger said. By then the gunman had worked his way to the back of the theater, shooting at people as they tried to run.

Seeger estimates she was trapped in the theater for 10 to 15 minutes. When she finally reached the lobby, she saw a police officer cocking a shotgun.

Once outside, Seeger called her father.

“My dad is not a sentimental guy, but he was crying on the phone,” Seeger said.

James Wilburn was also sitting in the second row of the theater when the emergency door opened.

“He was dressed in black,” Wilburn said, “wearing a flak jacket and a gas mask.”

The man dropped a canister to the floor that began spewing gas before he fired several rounds toward the back of the theater.

Naya Thompson, 21, said the gas spread quickly through the theater and thinks that the gunman may have dropped two canisters.

“It was like tear gas,” Thompson said. “I was coughing and choking, and I couldn’t breathe.”

Benjamin Fernandez, 30, said he was watching the movie when he heard a series of explosions. He said people ran from the theater and there were gunshots as police shouted, “Get down!”

Fernandez said he saw people falling, including one young girl.

Brittany Romero was in Theater 10 for the 12:15 a.m. showing. When the fire alarm sounded, people began throwing their popcorn and drinks in the air, assuming it was a practical joke, Romero said.

Salina Jordan, 19, was in Theater 8 and saw people fall after they were shot. She said one girl was struck in a cheek, and others were wounded in the stomach, including a girl who looked to be around 9 years old.

Jordan said it sounded like firecrackers until someone ran into Theater 8 yelling, “They’re shooting out here!”

The police came running in, telling people to run out. Some police were

carrying or dragging bodies, she said.

Meghan Walton, 20, of Boulder said she was sitting beside her friend Gage Hankins, 18 of Ohio in Theater 8 when he was shot in the arm before he was rushed out of the theater.

“I saw a whole lot of smoke in the aisle,” Walton said. “I saw about three or four bullets shot near the smoke.”

Walton was with 10 members of the group Friends: Association of Young People who Stutter.

“I ran outside and was holding his arm that was shot,” Walton said. “My eyes were blurred by the smoke. It was like chaos. People were crying hysterically.”

She counted 12 people who were bleeding. Ambulances started arriving, but there were not enough to put everyone in them.

“The worst was a man who was shot in the head. He had his hand on his head,” Walton said. “They started doubling up, putting two people in the same ambulance. One girl who wasn’t injured as badly was placed in a police car and rushed away.”

Police set up a command post near the Dillard’s department store and were interviewing hundreds of possible witnesses. Many were taken by bus to Gateway High School for questioning.

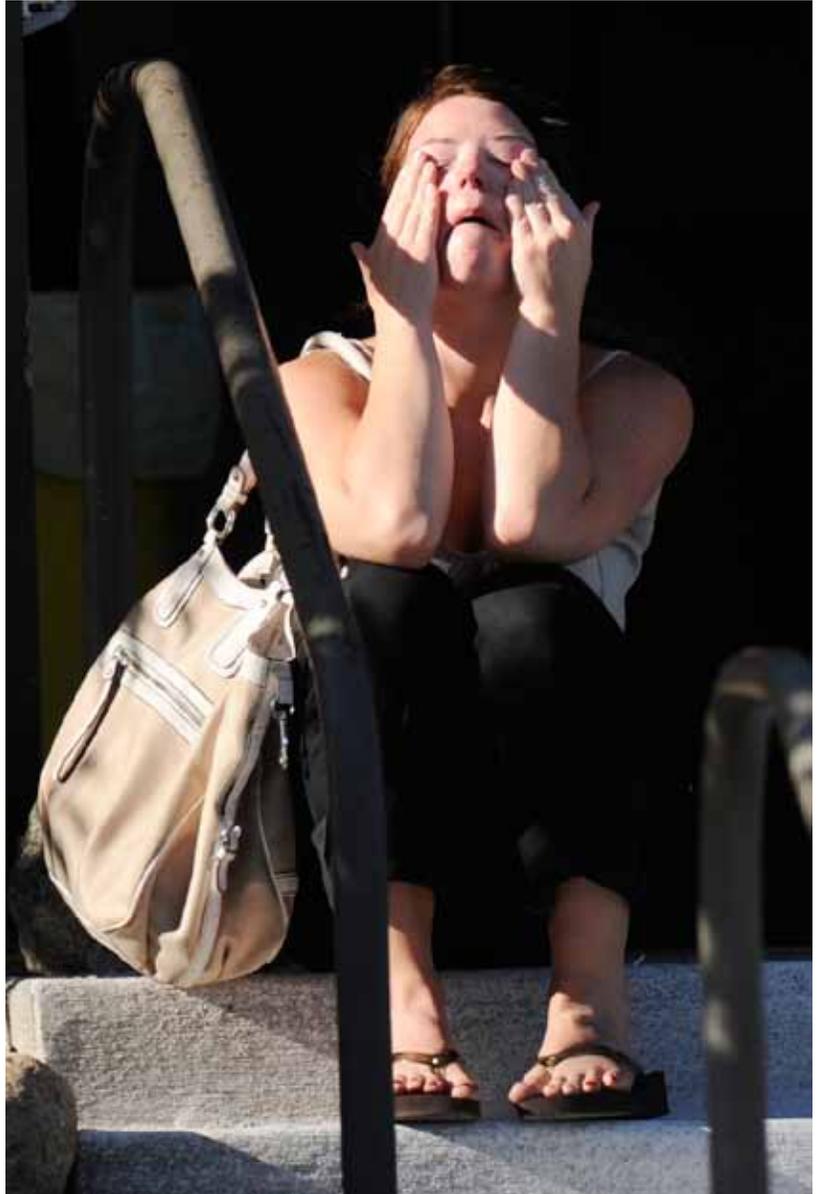
Robert Jones, 28, was in Theater 9 when the shooting started.

Jones said when he first saw smoke billowing from the front of the theater, he thought it was a special effect. Shots rang out almost immediately after.

“I thought it was pretty much the end of the world,” Roberts said.

Roberts stayed flat on the ground until police came into the theater.

Tammi Stevens said her son, 18-year-old Jacob Stevens, was inside The-



Amanda Medek, who was looking for her sister Micayla, is overcome with emotion outside Gateway High School on Friday in Aurora. Late Friday, it was confirmed that Micayla Medek was among the 12 people who lost their lives in the mass shooting at a movie theater. *RJ Sangosti, The Denver Post*

ater 9 when the shooting started. Stevens was waiting for her son at Gateway High School while police interviewed him.

Jacob told his mom that he saw a guy walk into the theater wearing body armor and throw some sort of cannister that then emitted some sort of gas.

“You let your kids go to a late night movie ... you never think something like this would happen,” Stevens said.

President Barck Obama addressed the shooting from Ft. Myers, Fla., Friday morning.

“We never understand what leads someone to terrorize their fellow human beings like this,” Obama said. “Life is very fragile, and it is precious.”

Gov. John Hickenlooper released a statement Friday morning.

“It is beyond the power of words to fully express our sorrow this morning,” Hickenlooper said. “We appreciate the swift work by local, state and federal law enforcement. Coloradans have a remarkable ability to support one another in times of crisis. This is one of those times.”

In a statement released Friday morning, Republican Mitt Romney said that he was “deeply saddened” by the “senseless violence.”

The FBI is assisting in the investigation. Officers and deputies responded from almost every local police and sheriff’s department in the metro area.

The FBI said that there was no indication that the shooting has any connection to terrorism.

Victims were transported to at least six hospitals. Several of them were rushed to hospitals in police cars. Ages of people injured and killed in the shooting vary.

One child and five adults were taken to Children’s Hospital Colorado. The adults ranged in age from 18 to 31 years old. One of the six patients died and the other five are currently listed in conditions from good to critical.

Information on which of the patients died was not released.

Shortly after midnight, patients started arriving at the Medical Center of Aurora. A total of 15 patients – ranging from 16 to 31 years old – were sent to the medical center, 12 of them with gunshot wounds.

Eight of the patients have been discharged, five victims remain in critical condition and two patients are being prepared for surgery.

All of the patients came in with wounds to their torsos, heads or necks.

Doctors said the wounds were caused by a high-caliber weapon or what appeared to be shrapnel.

Swedish Medical Center spokeswoman Nicole Williams says two people injured at the theater have arrived at the hospital in critical condition.

She says emergency workers said there could be several more patients.

Denver Health Medical Center treated six victims from the shooting. All were treated for gunshot wounds and abrasions. Three victims have since been released, the other three remain in fair condition, hospital officials said.

A total of 23 victims were taken to the University of Colorado Hospital.

Rep. Ronda Fields of Aurora announced that she is hosting a prayer vigil for “any and all” at 7 p.m. at the Aurora Municipal Building at 15151 E. Alameda Parkway.

Warner Bros. studio released a statement Friday morning saying the studio is “deeply saddened to learn about this shocking incident. The studio has canceled the red carpet premier of “The Dark Knight Rises” in Paris, The Hollywood Reporter said.

Aurora police are asking anyone with information about the shooting to call 303-627-3100.

Denver Post Staff Writers Eric Gorski, Kieran Nicholson, Michael Booth and Tegan Hanlon contributed to this report