

Beat: Miscellaneous

South Dakota executes man who raped, murdered 9-year-old girl

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USPA News - A South Dakotan man, who was convicted of raping and killing a 9-year-old girl after abducting her from a convenience store in 1990, was executed on late Tuesday evening, just two weeks after the state's first execution since 2007. Donald Moeller, 60, was administered a lethal injection at 10:01 p.m. local time at the state penitentiary in Sioux Falls, the largest city in the U.S. state of South Dakota. He took about eight deep, heavy breaths before he stopped breathing and turned slightly pink.

He was pronounced dead at 10:24 p.m. Moeller was convicted of abducting 9-year-old Rebecca O'Connell on May 8, 1990, from a convenience store in Sioux Falls where she had gone to buy sugar to make lemonade. Her naked body was found in a wooded area the next day, and an autopsy found she had been raped, sodomized and suffered knife wounds across her body. She died after her throat was cut. Moeller was arrested in Washington nine months after the murder and, despite DNA evidence which was the key to his murder convictions, he continued to claim being innocent for more than two decades. He finally admitted to his crimes earlier this year and said he would accept his punishment. The family of the victim traveled more than 1,400 miles (2,250 kilometers) from their home in New York state to watch the execution. "Finally, justice for Becky," said Dave Curl, the girl's stepfather, after the execution. "He is dead. He will no longer take another breath or hurt another child." Curl said Moeller had also taken their lives and that Tuesday's execution would not give them closure. "Everyone keeps telling us to make this about Becky. There is no Becky because of Donald Moeller," he said. "Whether right or wrong, we will hate that son-of-a-bitch until the day we die. May he rot in hell." Denny Kaemingk, the state's Secretary of Corrections, said Moeller's execution was carried out in accordance to state law. "Director of Prison Operations and Chief Warden Doug Weber and his staff spent extensive time preparing to ensure that the warrant of death sentence and execution was carried out in a professional, humane and dignified manner," he said. Tuesday's execution came just two weeks after the execution of murderer Eric Robert, who was the first inmate in South Dakota to be executed since Dave Curl died by lethal injection in 2007. Prior to that, cop killer George Sitts was electrocuted in 1947 and murderer Joseph Rickman was hanged in 1913.

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