

Coroner IDs person shot, killed at vape shop

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Staff Writer

FLORENCE, S.C. — A 23-year-old Florence man has been identified as the person who was shot and killed Wednesday night, allegedly as he was robbing a business.

“The individual shot while robbing a local tobacco store/vape shop Wednesday night has been identified as Raheem Raykwain Brantley, 23-year-old of

Florence. The Florence Police Department and Florence County Coroner’s Office are investigating,” Florence County Coroner Keith von Lutcken said in a release.

Florence police responded to a reported armed robbery at Smokers Town, located at 104 Woody Jones Boulevard, at 10:15 p.m. Wednesday.

While officers were responding, they were advised that the robbery suspect had

been shot by a store employee.

Upon arrival, officers learned that the suspect had fled the business after being shot.

Officers immediately began searching the surrounding area and located the suspect lying in a grassy area behind the business. The suspect was dead.

The suspect allegedly pointed the handgun at a store employee and demanded money.

As the suspect attempted to place money into a bag, the employee allegedly retrieved a handgun and fired multiple rounds at the suspect.

The suspect was struck by the gunfire and fled the business. Officers that located the suspect said they also found a handgun with him.

At this time, the store employee has not been charged in connection with the incident.

SC STILL AT RISK FOR STORMS



NOAA SATELLITES

An NOAA satellite view of Hurricane Erin off the U.S. East Coast on Aug. 20, 2025.

El Niño may not spare state from fall storms

NICOLE BLEVINS
The Sun News (Myrtle Beach, S.C.)

South Carolina is an area to watch for risk of tropical activity this fall despite a strengthening El Niño that typically curbs tropical formation in the Atlantic basin.

El Niño, and its counterpart La Niña, are the warm and cool phases of the earth’s climate determined by ocean temperatures in the equatorial Pacific.

Meteorologists have warned this El Niño could be one of the strongest climate events on record, and the strength could determine South Carolina’s coastal weather impacts through the rest of the year.

AccuWeather Long-Range Forecast Team Leader Paul Pastelok said this El Niño might show different impacts to South Carolina than in the past. Traditionally, El Niño events produce strong vertical wind shear making it difficult for hurricanes to develop in the Atlantic.

Pastelok marked September as a month that the wind shear might weaken, allowing better chances of tropical storm or hurricane formation. Another factor driving hurricane formation is warm ocean temperature, which is currently present in the Southwest Atlantic Ocean and Eastern Gulf.

“If anything can get going and make it to that area, it should survive and keep going,” he said.

When it comes to storms that could hit the Carolinas, Pastelok said some models

are showing a shut-down of upper level highs (large domes of atmospheric pressure) over the Western Gulf, allowing for the Bermuda High (high-pressure system near Bermuda) to try to build back westward.

“A lot of storms like to go on the west side of that Bermuda High. The farther west it crosses, the higher chance it has of maybe hitting the southeast coast,” Pastelok said. “We’re seeing at times that this Bermuda High here in August, and then again in September can press a little farther west, and that puts South Carolina and North Carolina kind of in the prime area if anything does get together and develop in the South Atlantic.”

How will El Niño impact other weather along SC’s coast?

El Niño typically means a wetter fall and winter season for the southeast coast. South Carolina is forecasted to be right around average precipitation for a 90-day outlook; however, the timing of impacts is what may skew the average.

Pastelok said based on previous El Niño seasons the precipitation falls heavier from Texas to the Ohio Valley region in the first half of the season before it reaches the southeast coast, making it difficult for the southeast coast to see above average rainfall.

“The only thing that would throw that off the edge would be a direct tropical hit,”

he said.

Most of the wetter period will come after November through the winter, Pastelok said. Risk of flooding would likely only be if a tropical system came on land.

Less rainfall early on in fall also means higher than average temperatures along the southeast coast. That could materialize in a couple of ways, whether it be through daytime highs with more sunshine or nighttime lows when the humidity is higher.

The drought is likely to continue through fall but improve as rainfall totals increase later in the season. Fire weather could be a concern, but only short term during periods of high wind, especially across the interior sections of the state, Pastelok said.

It may take some time for the drought to resolve, but a tropical system could help decrease the severity.

El Niño can bring more severe weather to localized regions. This type of severe weather is usually limited to Florida, but it could reach into parts of southern South Carolina.

What is making this El Niño so strong?

The strength of an El Niño or La Niña is determined by how much warmer or cooler the ocean temperature averages are in the equatorial Pacific.

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