

SEATTLE TIMES

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Oregon juror jailed for texting during trial

The Associated Press

SALEM, Ore. —

A judge in Oregon noticed an unexpected glow on a juror's chest while the courtroom lights were dimmed during video evidence in an armed-robbery trial.

The juror, it seemed, was texting.

Marion County Circuit Judge Dennis Graves cleared the courtroom and excused all jurors except 26-year-old Benjamin Kohler.

According to a news release from the Marion County Sheriff's Office, Kohler had no explanation for his actions.

Jurors in Oregon are given explicit instructions at the outset of each trial not to use cellphones in court.

Graves held Kohler in contempt, and Kohler spent most of Tuesday and Wednesday in the county jail. He was released Wednesday night.

Neither the nature of the text message nor its recipient was disclosed.

Kohler did not immediately return a phone call seeking comment Thursday.

An alternate juror took his place. Sheriff's spokesman Don Thomson said the trial ended Thursday with the defendant found guilty.