

PUBLIC INFORMATION RELEASE

FROM THE OFFICE OF
WASHINGTON COUNTY ATTORNEY DOUG JOHNSON

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MAN CHARGED WITH LEAVING THE SCENE OF AN ACCIDENT RESULTING IN GREAT BODILY HARM

Washington County Attorney Doug Johnson announced that his office has charged David Wayne Peterson (DOB 06/21/68) with two counts of Leaving the Scene of an Accident which resulted in the great bodily harm of a 15 year male on July 30, 2005, in Stillwater, Minnesota.

At 9:40 p.m. the Stillwater Police was dispatched to the intersection of Curve Crest Boulevard and Washington Avenue on a report of a hit and run accident involving a bicyclist and a vehicle. The suspect vehicle reportedly drove away from the scene in a reckless manner, dragging something from its undercarriage. When officers arrived at the scene they found paramedics attending to a 15 year old male, who they later learned was the bicyclist. Officer Ryan Mitchell spoke with a couple who lived two blocks from the accident scene who said they saw from their third floor balcony on Orleans Street, a very dark-colored, older-style SUV traveling north bound on Washington Avenue, dragging something, causing sparks on the road. They said the vehicle ran a stop sign on northbound Washington Avenue and Orleans Street. Then it turned west on Orleans Street, almost causing an accident. The vehicle then made a sudden right turn to travel northbound on Cottage Drive, at which time they saw a bicycle tire fall from underneath the vehicle. The vehicle continued northbound on Cottage Drive, still dragging something and showering sparks on the roadway. Officers began searching for a red or dark-colored Chevy Blazer.

On July 31st, a witness who lives on Pine Tree Trail contacted the Stillwater Police Department to report that the previous evening, between 9:30 and 10:15 he saw a dark red SUV speeding eastbound on Pine Street, make a quick right turn onto Pine Tree Trail, directly in front of his home. The vehicle was dragging something from underneath the passenger-side, creating sparks. He did not see the vehicle come back up the dead-end street for at least 20 minutes before he went back inside his house. Stillwater Police then drove down Pine Tree Trail and saw a red 2000 GMC Jimmy parked in the driveway of 704 Pine Tree Trail. They ran the license plate and determined it was registered to Michelle Peterson.

Thereafter, Stillwater Police Investigator Jeff Magler went to the residence, and noticed the vehicle was no longer in the driveway. David Wayne Peterson was at home and spoke with Investigator Jeff Magler. He said his wife had the vehicle at work and he would contact Investigator Jeff Magler when his wife returned in the evening. Later that day, Investigator Jeff Magler was called back to the Peterson residence where he looked at the vehicle in question but was unable to locate any damage.

On August 2nd Investigator Jeff Magler was contacted by an attorney who said his client was involved in the accident with the bicyclist and wished to turn himself in. Investigator Jeff Magler met with David Wayne Peterson on August 3rd. Peterson admitted that he was the one driving the red GMC Jimmy on July 30th around 9:30 p.m. He said that he had stopped at the intersection of Washington Avenue and Curve Crest Boulevard. While stopped, Peterson said he turned on his dome light and put a CD into the vehicle's CD player. He said he looked both ways, did not see any vehicle and proceeded through. When he was halfway through the intersection he looked up and suddenly struck an individual in the intersection. Peterson said he stopped, looked out his right outside mirror, saw an individual lying on the roadway. He stated that at this point he was overcome by fear, panicked and drove away quickly. Peterson admitted hearing something dragging from his vehicle, but assumed it was damage to the running board. When he arrived at home, Peterson got out of his vehicle and saw a bicycle protruding partway out from under the passenger side of his vehicle, just behind the front tire. He immediately tried to pull the bicycle out, but was unable to do so. He then jacked up the vehicle, pulled the bicycle out from underneath it and threw the bicycle in a large pond in the back of his yard. Peterson said he could no longer live with what he had done and decided to turn himself in. He then led Investigator Magler to his home and helped locate the damaged bicycle from the pond.

After the accident, the 15 year old bicyclist was taken to Regions Hospital where it was determined that he suffered a significant traumatic brain injury. After spending six days in intensive care he was then moved to Gillette Children's Specialty Health Care Center for an additional ten days of rehabilitation; at which point he was released to his parents' care.

"This is a very tragic accident for the victim and his family. I am pleased that Peterson finally turned himself in. Whenever a driver of a vehicle is involved in an accident they must stay at the scene and report it. If Mr. Peterson had done that, he might not be facing a felony charge today", said Johnson.

For further information, please contact Doug Johnson or Susan Harris at the Washington County Attorney's Office, 651-430-6115.