Chase of stolen car ends with driver dead, teen hurt
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Correction: Cleveland police chase stolen car; crash kills driver, injures teen
Article Text:
A 30-year-old Cleveland man was killed and his teenage passenger was seriously injured early Monday morning in Cleveland when the stolen car they were in crashed into a pole as they tried to evade police.

Two patrolmen involved in the chase were injured while pulling the suspects out of the burning wreckage.

The driver died at Huron Hospital. His family had not been notified of his death Monday night, according to the Cuyahoga County coroner's office spokesman.

The 17-year-old Cleveland teen, whom police first identified as a 20-year-old because of false identification he was carrying, was in critical condition Monday at MetroHealth Medical Center.

The short chase began about 12:20 a.m. at East 79th Street and Buckeye Road after officers noticed heavy damage to the front of the maroon Monte Carlo the men were riding in, said Lt. Thomas Stacho, a police spokesman. Police checked the license plate number and learned it was registered to another car.

When officers turned on their lights and siren, the driver sped north on East 79th Street and crashed less than three minutes later on East 83rd Street near Euclid Avenue, police said. The car slammed into a pole and burst into flames.

Patrolman Dan Lentz, an 11-year veteran, and his rookie partner, Patrolman Dan Rescina, pulled the unconscious men from the car and were treated for smoke inhalation.

"This shows the professionalism of our officers. They risked their lives for someone who put their lives in danger," Stacho said.

Rescina, who graduated from the police academy last month, and Lentz found a loaded sawed-off shotgun and masks in the car, Stacho said. Detectives will try to determine if the gun had been used in recent crimes.

Cleveland Police Department policies state that officers should not chase a car simply because of suspicious license plates.

Seconds before the crash, the patrolmen's supervisor told them to end the chase. After the crash, police determined that the car had been stolen Oct. 30 from a used car lot at West 51st Street and Lorain Avenue.

"This pursuit, like every pursuit, will be evaluated to determine whether or not our protocols were followed," Stacho said. "That being said, based on a preliminary review of the facts, there will be no administrative charges against our officers."