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Cyclist Fleeing Police Killed

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Article Text:

One motorcyclist died and another crashed after they fled Santa Fe's top cop — Police Chief Eric Johnson — after Johnson spotted the bikers speeding on Rodeo Road on Friday night, according to a police department spokesman.

There was no high-speed chase involving police before the two motorcycle crashes, although Johnson at one point turned on his siren and flashing lights in an effort to stop the bikers, said Deputy Chief Stan Mascarenas.

"This was just a tragedy all around," Mascarenas said.

Mascarenas identified the dead motorcycle driver as Jorge Bojorquez, 20. A 16-year-old girl who was riding on the same bike with Bojorquez was hurt, but her injuries were not life-threatening, Mascarenas said.

Twenty-year-old Gabriel Jaramillo suffered broken ribs and injuries to his arms and legs when a second motorcycle crashed and burned, Mascarenas said.

No charges have been filed, but the incident remains under investigation.

According to Mascarenas:

About 7:30 p.m. Friday, Johnson was driving west on Rodeo Road near the county fairgrounds when he saw four motorcycles heading the opposite direction at high speed. One of the bikers was riding on his back wheel. "He popped a wheelie," Mascarenas said.

Johnson turned his police car around and followed. Near the intersection of Zia and Camino Carlos Rey, as traffic slowed down, Johnson was two or three vehicles behind the motorcycles and turned on his siren and flashing lights in an effort to get them to pull over because of the speeding and reckless driving he'd seen.

Instead, after one of the bikers turned around and saw Johnson's car with the flashing lights, the bikers continued forward, weaving "in and out" around other vehicles on Zia, Mascarenas said.

Johnson turned off the lights and siren and continued east on Zia. Near Zia and Calle Bella — between Camino Carlos Rey and Yucca — he came upon a crash of one of the motorcycles near a wall.

Bojorquez, the driver of that bike, later died at St. Vincent Regional Medical Center. The girl who was riding with him was also taken to the hospital.

About the same time, police responded to the crash of Jaramillo's motorcycle, a short distance farther east on Zia, across from the handball courts at the intersection with Yucca.

Mascarenas said he personally responded to the scene, where the bike had exploded into flames about 20 feet high.

Jaramillo was reported in critical condition at the hospital Saturday morning, Mascarenas said.

"They were all wearing helmets," Mascarenas said. "Unfortunately, when you're traveling at a

high rate of speed, they don't always protect you."

Mascarenas said it wasn't known how fast the four motorcycles were going when Johnson observed them, "but the chief described it as very high speed."

"I caution every driver out there to abide by the speed limits," Mascarenas said. "The speed limits are there to assure the safety of all drivers, on motorcycles or other vehicles."

He said police hope the other two motorcyclists spotted by Johnson will come forward and talk to the police. Anyone with information can call Crime Stoppers at 955-5050 or the police at 955-5163.

Caption:

JOHNSON: Police chief followed four speeding motorcycles

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