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Driver allegedly fleeing police charged with vehicular homicide

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Article Text:

LAS CRUCES A Las Cruces man who led police on a brief chase, and in the process allegedly caused a fatal crash, was indicted Thursday on vehicular homicide and other charges.

A Doña Ana County grand jury indicted Justin Hatch, 20, on one count of vehicular homicide, two counts of great bodily injury by vehicle and seven other charges for the Nov. 10 crash that killed 26-year-old Mary Sandoval.

According to records, the crash was caused when Hatch allegedly ran a stop sign at Lohman Avenue and San Pedro Street and, at a high rate of speed, struck Sandoval's vehicle.

Hatch told a passenger he wanted to run from police and had allegedly been drinking and smoking marijuana prior to the crash, according to court records.

The incident began when an officer witnessed Hatch run a stop light at the corner of Amador Avenue and Mesquite Street.

Sandoval died from her injuries at Thomason Hospital in El Paso. Her two passengers an 8-year-old and and 18-year-old were seriously injured.

Hatch was also indicted on two counts of child abuse because two 14-year-olds were in the vehicle with him, according to records.

Police spokesman Dan Trujillo has declined to characterize the incident as a police pursuit. He has said the officer turned on his unit's sirens and emergency lights, and one block later, Hatch allegedly turned southbound on San Pedro, against traffic.

Trujillo has said the entire incident ended in less than 10 seconds.

Hatch remained jailed Monday at the Doña Ana County Detention Center on \$100,000 bond.

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Caption:

Photo: Justin Hatch

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