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2 drug suspects die in police chase

Crash came as Heber Springs men fled Sherwood officers, officials say

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Article Text:

Two Heber Springs men suspected of drug manufacturing died about noon Friday when the car they were driving in collided with another vehicle as they were being pursued by Sherwood police on U.S. Highway 67/167 near Jacksonville.

Officers tried to pull over a 1992 Chevrolet Lumina at the request of Conway Police Department undercover narcotics detectives, who had been following the pair all morning as they drove across central Arkansas buying the components of a mobile methamphetamine lab, police said.

Police said the accident occurred when the driver of the Lumina tried to evade the officers by driving across the median into oncoming traffic and up the southbound Redmond Road entrance ramp, where the car collided with a 2002 Dodge Durango driven by a 46-year-old Jacksonville woman.

The woman was not seriously injured but was taken to Baptist Health Medical Center for evaluation, said Sherwood police spokesman Lt. Mike Payne.

Arkansas State Police are investigating the fatal accident, which was the second on Pulaski County's highways on Friday. Earlier Friday morning, a motorist was killed in a one-car accident on Interstate 40 just west of Interstate 430.

The two occupants of the Lumina - Donald Bloomfield, 40, and Homer W. McFadden, 40 - were pronounced dead at the scene of the accident. Police said Bloomfield drove the car.

"In the vehicle, we found all the components for a meth lab," Payne said.

Pulaski County coroner officials had to wait for the state Crime Laboratory's hazardous materials team to clean up the chemicals before they were able to retrieve the bodies from the wreckage.

Payne said officers were called about 11:30 a.m. Friday by the undercover Conway officers, who said the suspects had stopped at the Wal-Mart on Landers Road.

"When our officers got there, the suspects fled northbound on the highway and our officer got into a pursuit of the vehicle," Payne said.

During the pursuit, the Lumina had a large lead on the patrol car, but the officers were able to keep the car in sight. Payne said speeds during the pursuit didn't exceed 70 mph.

"Our officers and supervisors are trained that whenever a pursuit gets too dangerous, either the officer or his supervisor should call it off in order to protect the public," Payne said.

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