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Section: A-1

Page: A1

Topics:

Index Terms:

A-1

Two killed after auto theft leads to police chase, accident

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Article Text:

One day after Anthony V. Williams pleaded guilty to stealing a car in Spartanburg County, he stole another vehicle from the same business and led police on a chase that ended with his death and the death of a Laurens woman.

Williams, 20, of Clinton and Sharon M. Putman, 40, of Laurens died in a four-car accident that occurred about 11:45 a.m. on Highway 14 near Gray Court. Williams and Putman were riding in separate vehicles.

Cpl. Mark Gosnell with the Highway Patrol said a Laurens city police officer attempted to stop the Mitsubishi Williams was driving after receiving a report that a car matching its description was stolen.

When Williams attempted to pass a vehicle on a hill, he collided head-on with Putman's vehicle.

Two other vehicles were involved in the crash. Kenneth Lee Robinson, 49, of Gray Court and Scott D. Williams, 40, of Simpsonville were not seriously injured, according to Gosnell.

The Highway Patrol is still investigating the accident and how the other vehicles were involved.

The police car was not involved in the crash.

Williams pleaded guilty Wednesday to stealing a 1995 BMW 325 from the BP Station at 1994 Reidville Road on Dec. 1, 1999. Circuit Judge Lee Alford sentenced Williams to time served and five years of probation when he pleaded

guilty to grand larceny and use of a vehicle without owner's consent, court records said.

The plea didn't involve any negotiation by prosecutors, Deputy Solicitor Donnie Willingham said.

The convicted car thief was released from the Spartanburg County jail about 9:40 p.m.

Thursday.

He returned to the BP Station on Reidville Road about 8:10 a.m. Friday and stole the 1998 Mitsubishi. A Landrum woman told investigators her car was stolen when she went inside the business to pay for gas, sheriff's reports said.

Minutes after the theft, one of Williams' relatives approached the deputy who responded and asked if they were looking for Anthony. The relative gave a description that matched the car thief, reports said.

Investigator William Gary of the Sheriff's Office said both car thefts occurred hours after Williams was released from jail on similar charges. He also said both thefts occurred when people left their keys in their cars.

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Caption:

One mugshot accompanied this story.
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