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U.S. Customs and

Border Protection

(/)

Smuggler loses control of vehicle while evading checkpoint, causing a death and injuries to ejected passengers

Release Date: August 17, 2021

LAS CRUCES, N.M.

For More Information: Contact El Paso CBP Public Affairs (202) 407-4241

On August 3, 2021, a Border Patrol Agent (BPA) assigned to the Las Cruces, NM, U.S. Border Patrol Station (USBP) was patrolling near a remote area on New Mexico State Road 185 (NMSR 185), approximately six miles south of a USBP checkpoint. The BPA observed a Ford Expedition traveling northbound. He initially followed from a distance and saw the vehicle pull to the side of the road. As the BPA drew closer, the vehicle accelerated and proceeded north on NMSR 185. The BPA followed the Expedition without activating his emergency equipment and alerted BPAs at the checkpoint of the approaching vehicle.

At approximately 4:45 AM, the Expedition circumvented the checkpoint by driving around the traffic cones onto southbound lanes and continued northbound on NMSR 185 at a high rate of speed. The BPA activated his emergency equipment and attempted to stop the vehicle while an additional Border Patrol unit pursued the smuggler. The driver of the Expedition failed to yield and continued for approximately three miles until the driver lost control and crashed, which ejected several occupants from the vehicle. BPAs immediately requested emergency medical services (EMS) and rendered aid to the occupants.

Native Air EMS responded and airlifted four occupants, including a male citizen of Ecuador, to the University Medical Center (UMC) in El Paso, TX. Three occupants were transported by EMS to Mountain View Hospital in Las Cruces, and three other occupants with minor injuries were transported to Memorial Hospital in Las Cruces.

On August 11, 2021, UMC medical personnel conducted a brain flow study which determined the Ecuadorian man failed to show brain activity. Although the man initially was placed on a ventilator, the El Paso County Office of the Medical Examiner declared him deceased, and on August 12, 2021 the ventilator was removed and he succumbed to his injuries.

This incident is being investigated by Homeland Security Investigations, the New Mexico State Police, and reviewed by the U.S. Customs and Border Protection Office of Professional Responsibility and the El Paso County Office of the Medical Examiner. The U.S. Department of Homeland Security Office of Inspector General was also notified.

Update:

On August 15, 2021, the driver of the vehicle, a male United States citizen, died at the University Medical Center in El Paso, TX.

U.S. Customs and Border Protection is the unified border agency within the Department of Homeland Security charged with the management, control and protection of our nation's borders at and between official ports of entry. CBP is charged with securing the borders of the United States while enforcing hundreds of laws and facilitating lawful trade and travel.

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