



Genesee County Prosecutor's Office

David Leyton, Prosecutor



North Branch Man Pleads Guilty to Second-Degree Murder for October 2007 Drunk Driving Death of Flint Man

April 9, 2008

FLINT -- Calling it a tragic case that demonstrates the grim consequences of drunk driving, Prosecutor Leyton said that today's guilty plea to second-degree murder by a North Branch man for the October 2007 crash that killed a Flint man sends a strong message to the community.

David M. Thomas, 35, is expected to be sentenced June 24 by Circuit Court Judge Joseph Farah on second-degree murder and operating while intoxicated causing death for his actions in the early morning hours of October 20, 2007.

Investigative reports from the Genesee County Fatal Alcohol Crash Team and City of Flint police indicate that Thomas crashed into two cars at Miller Road and Ballenger Highway, killing Rondle L. Johnson, 36, of Flint and injuring a woman riding in Johnson's car.

Police said Thomas lost control of his car about 2:30 a.m. after running a red light while headed west on Miller at high speed. He apparently turned off his headlights to escape a Flint police officer who was trying to stop him for allegedly driving the wrong way on a one-way street in the city.

The Flint officer lost sight of Thomas near Miller and Knight Avenue and was searching neighborhood side streets when Thomas crashed.

Prosecutor Leyton said that this case represents everyone's worst nightmare about drinking and driving.

"When you've been drinking to the point where you're beyond the legal limit and you get behind the wheel of a car and drive, you are putting yourself and everyone else on the road at risk," he said.

"Mr. Thomas' decision to drive while intoxicated resulted in grim consequences not only for the deceased and his passenger but for Mr. Thomas himself who is now looking at a very lengthy prison sentence," Leyton said.

Under a Cobbs agreement between defendant Thomas and the Court, Thomas faces between 15 and 25 years in prison when sentenced. Prosecutor Leyton noted that the victim's family confirmed to his office that they were in support of the Cobbs agreement reached between the defendant and the Court in securing Thomas' guilty plea.

"Nobody can turn back the hands of time and undo what was done that tragic evening," said Leyton. "The best that I can do is to seek justice in a court of law for the victim, his family, and for our community and I believe this case has been resolved to that end. I think a second-degree murder conviction sends a very strong message to the community."

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