



Riverside County District Attorney

NEWS RELEASE

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JURY CONVICTS MAN OF MURDER DURING HIGH-SPEED PURSUIT

INDIO, CA: Today, a Riverside County jury convicted Jason Rutan Pappas (DOB: 03/12/72), of second-degree murder, evading a peace officer, and driving under the influence. The jury returned the verdicts in Department 1B of the Indio Courthouse after only one day of deliberations.

“Driving under the influence and evading police obviously places the entire community at serious risk,” said District Attorney Rod Pacheco. “We take these cases seriously and we will seek the greatest penalty when people are killed.”

On June 3, 2009, a Cathedral City police officer observed a vehicle, driven by Pappas, traveling at speeds around 80 miles per hour in a 35-mile-per-hour zone along East Palm Canyon in the city of Cathedral City. When the officer tried to conduct a traffic stop, the driver, later identified as Pappas, increased his speed, ran through a red light, and attempted to evade the officer. Ultimately, as Pappas tried to navigate a left turn onto Country Club Drive in the city of Rancho Mirage, he lost control and slammed his vehicle into a palm tree. Based upon the length of the locked-wheel skids, it was estimated the vehicle was traveling at 76 miles per hour upon impact.

A passenger in the car, Gregory Fisher, 56, was pronounced dead upon arrival at Eisenhower Regional Medical Center. The cause of death was determined to be multiple blunt impact injuries from the collision. Pappas was treated for minor injuries and then arrested for driving under the influence. Pappas has a prior conviction for driving under the influence in 2007.

Pappas is scheduled to be sentenced on May 5, 2010 in Dept. 1B of the Indio Courthouse. He faces up to 35 years to life in prison. The case, INF065853, was prosecuted by Deputy District Attorney Grant Kim.

“This defendant placed everyone in our community, including the pursuing officers, in danger,” said Deputy District Attorney Grant Kim. “I am pleased that the jury decided to hold this defendant accountable for such reckless criminal behavior that resulted in the loss of life.”

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