



ERIK NASARENKO
District Attorney

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Ventura County District Attorney Notes Disturbing Spike in DUI Fatalities; Warns Public Not to Drink and Drive as the Holiday Weekend Approaches

VENTURA, California – Ventura County District Attorney Erik Nasarenko announced today that case filings of DUI-related traffic fatalities were at the highest level in 10 years and warned the public not to drink and drive as the holiday weekend approaches.

In 2021, the Ventura County District Attorney's Office filed eight cases of vehicular manslaughter while intoxicated or DUI murder, nearly double the number of case filings from prior years, and the highest total of case submissions in the last decade.

"The pandemic has produced multiple dangers," said District Attorney Nasarenko. "Among them are an increase in DUI crashes that kill motorists on our roadways. Do not get behind the wheel after drinking or using drugs. The consequences of doing so can be deadly, and the result of your actions will lead to criminal prosecution and significant time in prison."

In one of the 2021 case filings, Jose Leon-Tobon, of Los Angeles, pled guilty to vehicular manslaughter while intoxicated and was sentenced to 10 years in state prison after a head-on collision on Foothill Road. Leon-Tobon's blood results were positive for methamphetamine. Officers located additional methamphetamine, drug paraphernalia and beer in his car. The 30-year-old drove at a high rate of speed, crossing the center line into oncoming traffic, striking the truck driven by 62-year-old Erik Shaw, resulting in his death.

The surge in DUI fatalities is accompanied by an alarming increase in prosecutions for reckless driving. In 2021, there were 73 cases submitted of reckless driving in Ventura County, the highest number in 10 years and a 35 percent increase over 2020.

“Unfortunately, we are seeing more criminal acts of reckless and erratic driving during the second year of the pandemic,” said Nasarenko. “Reckless driving presents a significant danger on our roadways. Our office takes it very seriously and will pursue vehicular manslaughter charges if someone is killed as a result.”

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The Ventura County District Attorney’s Office is the public prosecutor for the county’s 850,000 residents. The office employs approximately 290 employees including attorneys, investigators, victim advocates, and professional support staff who strive to seek justice, ensure public safety, and protect the rights of crime victims.