

Wed, March 2, 2005

Cop faces charges

Accused of drunk driving causing death

By CARY CASTAGNA, POLICE REPORTER

The off-duty Winnipeg police officer involved in a three-vehicle crash last Friday that killed a 40-year-old mother is charged with impaired driving causing death. Derek Harvey-Zenk, 31, also faces charges for refusing a breathalyser, dangerous operation of a motor vehicle causing death and criminal negligence causing death.

Robert Taman, the grieving husband of Crystal Ann Taman, 40, declined to comment yesterday, after East St. Paul police officially laid the charges.

"I want to get through the next few days and devote my time to my family and I may have something to say after that period," he told The Sun.

ADMINISTRATIVE LEAVE

Harvey-Zenk, a five-year member of the Winnipeg Police Service, was placed on paid administrative leave yesterday, Chief Jack Ewatski said in a statement issued through spokesman Const. Bob Johnson.

Ewatski didn't return calls yesterday.

Harvey-Zenk, who also goes by Harvey-Morden-Zenk, had been working as a constable out of the District 3 police station at 260 Hartford Ave., in West Kildonan.

He is a former correctional officer who last worked at Headingley Jail in 2000 before becoming a cop.

Sources said Harvey-Zenk, who is married, is an avid runner and plays on a hockey team made up of corrections officers. A former co-worker said he wasn't a heavy drinker.

"It's disappointing an individual in that position has made a bad decision like that, if it turns out the allegations are all true. It's such an avoidable thing," local Mothers Against Drunk Driving president Rod Sudbury said, offering condolences to the Taman family on behalf of his organization.

Sudbury, a retired 28-year veteran of the Winnipeg Police Service, said anyone -- whether they're a "police officer or John Q. Citizen" -- should know they're flirting with disaster if they drink and drive.

One cop said the Winnipeg Police Service has been rocked by the allegations against Harvey-Zenk. Another cop described the situation as ugly. "And it's going to get uglier," the officer told The Sun.

East St. Paul police Chief Harry Bakema said although the case involved a fellow police officer, it was handled like any other investigation.

"It doesn't matter who it is you're dealing with. Everybody has to be treated the same," said Bakema, who met with the Taman family prior to issuing a media release early yesterday afternoon. East St. Paul police are continuing to investigate.

Dental assistant Crystal Ann Taman was stopped at a red light in the southbound lane of Highway 59 north of the Perimeter Highway about 7 a.m. Friday, when her 1991 Chevrolet

Sprint convertible was rear-ended by a 1995 Dodge Dakota truck. She was pronounced dead in hospital.

In the chain-reaction crash, Taman's convertible rammed into the rear of a 2000 Hyundai, which was driven by the wife of a Winnipeg police staff sergeant, sources said.

The officer's wife was treated for injuries.

Due to Harvey-Zenk's position, the case will be handled by outside Crown attorney Marty Minuk, a justice official said.