

BENTON COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

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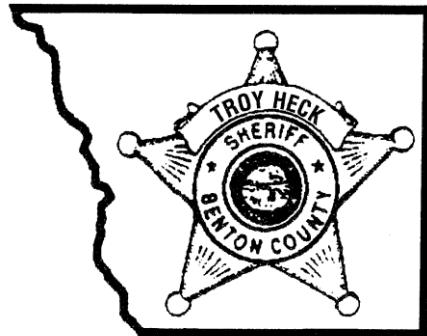
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Troy Heck, Sheriff
Neal Jacobson, Chief Deputy

PRESS RELEASE

DATE: 05-17-19

AUTHORITY OF SHERIFF TROY HECK

On May 15th the Benton County Sheriff's Office responded to a head on collision between a pickup truck and a car in Sauk Rapids Township.

At about 9:30 pm on May 15th, deputies were sent to the 800 block of 35th St NE on the report of a head on collision between two vehicles. Upon arrival, deputies found a 2000 Mazda B2500 pickup with significant front end damage stopped on 35th St NE facing eastbound in the westbound lane. A 2002 Saturn SL coupe with significant front end damage was found facing south partially in the eastbound lane and partially in the ditch on the south side of 35th St NE about 25 feet from the Mazda truck. Deputies found Lonnie Wayne Noponen (age 57 of Sartell) had been driving the pickup truck and a 16 year-old female from Rice had been driving the passenger car. There were no other passengers in either vehicle. Both drivers had to be extricated from their vehicles by the Sauk Rapids Fire Department. Both drivers suffered serious injuries and were transported by ambulance to the St. Cloud Hospital. Evidence at the scene indicated that the eastbound Mazda pickup crossed over the center line on 35th St NE and collided with the westbound Saturn coupe. Investigating deputies collected the cellular telephones of both drivers so that a forensic examination could be performed to help determine if distraction was a factor in this crash. Additionally, deputies investigating the possibility of driver impairment obtained a search warrant to conduct a blood draw on Noponen as several prescription medications were found in his vehicle during the investigation into this crash. This accident remains under investigation. The Benton County Sheriff's Office was assisted at the scene of this accident by the Sauk Rapids Fire Department, Sauk Rapids Police Department, Minnesota State Patrol, and Mayo Medical.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Troy Heck".

Troy Heck
Benton County Sheriff