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PRESS RELEASE

Oct. 26, 2011

Ukiah driver faces state prison in fatal single-car accident

An Ukiah driver who delayed reporting the fatal injury of a passenger hurt in a single-car accident entered guilty pleas Tuesday in Mendocino County Superior Court to gross vehicular manslaughter and failure to report the fatality, both felonies.

Cody Jarrod Fisher, 29, is scheduled to be sentenced at 1:30 p.m. Dec. 16. Fisher faces up to 11 years in state prison.

Prosecutor Matt Hubley said Fisher's case is a story of a birthday celebration turned deadly.

Authorities said Fisher, victim Matt Pare, 30, of Poway, and a third man left Fisher's home in a remote area of McNab Ranch, which is located west of Highway 101 between Ukiah and Hopland, on the night of Aug. 28. Fisher parked his pickup truck alongside McNab Ranch Road near its intersection with Highway 101, where he and his friends met a cab they had summoned to take them into Ukiah for a birthday night on the town.

When the three men were done drinking, they hailed a cab to take them back to Fisher's parked truck. After a short debate about who should drive, Fisher insisted on driving because it was his truck. At about 2:30 a.m., Fisher was driving home along Bus McGall Road south of Lane Drive when the vehicle suddenly went off the roadway. It overturned, and slid on its roof down a dirt and grass embankment before slamming into a tree.

Fisher and a 35-year-old passenger escaped with only minor injuries, but the victim died at the accident scene from his injuries.

CHP officers said Fisher instead of immediately summoning help called a friend to bring him a pot of coffee in an attempt to sober up. Almost four hours later Fisher finally called the CHP to report the accident, according to reports. The CHP said Fisher was still under the influence of alcohol when he was given a breathalyzer test several hours after the accident.