



BUTTE COUNTY DISTRICT ATTORNEY



MICHAEL L. RAMSEY
District Attorney

MARK MURPHY
Chief Deputy District Attorney

JASON WINES
Chief Investigator

PRESS RELEASE

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NO CHARGES FOR FORMER GRIDLEY CITY ADMINISTRATOR

Paul Eckert, 58, was stopped at 12:05 a.m. on October 3, 2020 by the California Highway Patrol in the city of Gridley for having no taillights. During the initial interaction with Eckert the officer noticed physiological indicators that suggested he might be under the influence of a controlled substance, not alcohol.

A number of field sobriety tests were given to Eckert, which were not performed satisfactorily. This, combined with the physical manifestations, lead the officer to conclude Eckert's ability to safely operate a motor vehicle was impaired. As a result Eckert was arrested for driving under the influence of a drug. A blood sample was collected and later analyzed, which revealed that Eckert had ingested a prescribed medication. No alcohol was detected in the blood sample.

Upon further investigation it was discovered that some of the rare and unexpected side effects of that medication (e.g. racing heartbeat) were the same as those observed by the officer and mimicked the symptoms of commonly abused drugs. Furthermore, there was an absence of other evidence of impairment, such as poor driving. The district attorney's office has therefore declined to charge Eckert with driving under the influence, which requires a knowing ingestion of drugs known to cause impairment in a driver's ability to control a vehicle.