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PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release
September 1, 2021

OROVILLE STREET RACER PLEADS GUILTY TO MULTIPLE MANSLAUGHTER COUNTS

In a legally unusual case, an Oroville street racer today pleaded guilty to causing the deaths of three persons in a rival car even though he did not hit or touch the other car in their mutual race.

Carlos Lee Hill, Jr., 20, of Oroville, was in Butte County Superior Court where he pleaded guilty to three felony counts of vehicular manslaughter with gross negligence, as well as an additional charge of street racing causing serious injury or death. The charges stemmed from an incident in late April of this year when Hill's Camaro and a Jeep Grand Cherokee engaged in a high-speed drag race down Lincoln Boulevard in south Oroville, which ended when the Jeep failed to negotiate a turn in the road and crashed. Hill was alone in his car, but the Jeep contained two adult males in the front seat and two young girls, ages two and four, unrestrained in the rear seat. The collision killed the two adults and the two-year-old, and seriously maimed the four-year-old.

Butte County District Attorney Mike Ramsey said that around noon on April 29, 2021, calls started coming in of street race with a vehicle that had crashed off the road at Lincoln Boulevard and Baggett-Marysville Road. Upon arrival, first responders encountered a chaotic scene with debris, downed power poles with live wires, and a completely destroyed Jeep SUV. They also encountered multiple victims who were severely injured. The two adult victims were pronounced deceased at the scene, and the two-year-old was rushed to Oroville Hospital where she was declared dead. Hill had stopped his vehicle down the street and returned to see the destruction, but then fled the area.

The fourth victim, four years old, was taken by helicopter to UC Davis where doctors and nurses were able to save her life. Ramsey said she recovering well from her very serious injuries.

Ramsey said that over the following weeks and months, CHP officers and a prosecutor from his office conducted an extensive investigation to piece together what had led up to the fatal crash. They located nearby surveillance cameras, witnesses, and physical evidence. Specialized officers and engineers with the CHP's Multidisciplinary Accident Investigation Team (MAIT) assisted in the investigation, ultimately determining the Jeep was travelling between 106-110 mph at the time of the crash. Ramsey noted the speed limit for that road is between 35-45mph.

Ramsey said that although Hill's Camaro did not strike the Jeep that crashed, Hill was nonetheless legally responsible for the deaths and injuries to other driver and passengers. Ramsey explained the law provides that one is legally responsible where their reckless actions play a major part in causing the death of another person – even if, as in this case, the two cars never actually touched.

Ramsey said the deaths and injuries in this case have hit the close-knit community in south Oroville particularly hard, as many residents knew the victims and their families personally. Ramsey noted residents told his office that Hill was a known street racer in the area and felt that it was only a matter of time until a tragedy, such as occurred, would happen. Many reported Hill's actions to authorities, but he would be gone when they arrived.

Ramsey said his office and the CHP pushed the unusual legal theory in this case to send the message that dangerous street racing is not tolerated in Butte County.

Sentencing is scheduled for September 29, 2021. Hill faces a stipulated upper term sentence of nine years four months in state prison.

