

BARNES COUNTY PEDESTRIAN FATAL CRASH UPDATE 2

****Name release of suspect driver, and charges pending****

What: Hit and Run Pedestrian Fatal Crash

Where: I-94, MM 282 (eastbound), approximately 8 miles west of Valley City

When: Sunday, December 21, 2025; at 12:11 a.m. Central Time

Road Conditions: Dry

Weather Conditions: Dry

Crash Involvement: Under investigation

Type of Crash: Hit and run

Agencies Involved: North Dakota Highway Patrol, Barnes County Sheriff's Office, Barnes County Coroner, North Dakota Bureau of Criminal Investigation

Vehicle No. 1: 2001 Ford F-250

Driver 1: Garret Kuntz, 22, Mandan, uninjured

Restraints: Unknown

Charges: Charges submitted -pending review from Barnes County States Attorney's Office

Pedestrian: Jerson Mejia, 27, Honduras, fatality

NARRATIVE: On Saturday, December 20, 2025, dispatch received multiple 911 calls reporting a pedestrian walking along Interstate 94. Law enforcement made contact with the man and he declined assistance. Additional calls continued to be received throughout the evening, with the last report to dispatch occurring at approximately 10:55 p.m.

On Sunday, December 21, 2025, at approximately 2:30 p.m., a passerby observed a body in the ditch and called 911. The North Dakota Highway Patrol and the Barnes County Sheriff's Office

responded and observed pieces of a vehicle consistent with a hit-and-run and located the pedestrian deceased in the same area.

The hit-and-run vehicle has not been identified or located. The NDHP is asking for the public's assistance looking for a vehicle with new damage that would have been in the area during the late-night hours of Saturday, December 20, 2025, or the early morning hours of Sunday, December 21, 2025. A large portion of a vehicle's bug deflector was found damaged and left at the scene. There may also be damage to the front and/or passenger side.

If you have information related to this incident, please contact the North Dakota Highway Patrol at 701-328-2447 or via email: ndhpsafetyedu@nd.gov.

The crash remains under investigation by the North Dakota Highway Patrol.

UPDATE 1:

Vehicle Information Sought

At this time, the color, exact make, and model of the vehicle involved are unknown. NDHP is asking the public to focus on damage characteristics, not vehicle color.

Based on evidence recovered at the scene, the vehicle is believed to have damage to the front bumper and passenger-side front quarter panel. A bug deflector was located and pieced back together; a photograph of the reconstructed bug deflector is included with this release. NDHP believes a black plastic 7-inch by 4-inch piece may be missing from behind the bumper on the passenger-side front quarter panel. Additionally, a 1-inch chrome-colored piece may be missing from the headlight assembly.

Based on the bug deflector and damage pattern, the vehicle may be a Ford F-150 or Ford F-250 from the early to mid-2000s.

This is the only vehicle-related information available at this time. Anyone with information matching these damage characteristics is encouraged to contact NDHP at ndhpsafetyedu@nd.gov or 701-328-2447 and reference case # 2025008312. Tipsters may remain anonymous.

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UPDATE 2:

The North Dakota Highway Patrol (NDHP) thanks the public for a significant response to a request for information related to this case. NDHP received information via an anonymous tip and ultimately located a 2001 Ford F-250 with evidentiary value linking it to the fatal pedestrian hit and run crash that occurred the night of December 20th or early morning of December 21st, 2025. The suspect, **Garret Kuntz, 22, Mandan**, has been identified as the driver. Charges have been submitted and are pending review from the Barnes County State's Attorney's Office.

This is the only information that will be released at this time. The release will be updated pending outcome of Barnes County State's Attorney review. The crash remains under investigation by the North Dakota Highway Patrol.

Contact information: Lt. Jenna Clawson Huibregtse, ndhpsafetyedu@nd.gov, 701-328-2447

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<https://www.nd.gov/ndhp/ndhp-news>