

CHP officer involved in fatal accident on Hwy. 50

Updated: Jan. 1 2pm.

By Kathryn Reed

A 21-year-old Walnut Creek man died early New Year's morning when he was struck by two vehicles on Highway 50 in Stateline.

The name of the victim is not being released pending notification of next of kin.

A California Highway Patrol vehicle first struck the man. The force sent the person into the westbound lane where he was lodged in the undercarriage of a Reno-Tahoe Transportation van. The man was pronounced dead at the scene.

Officer Joshua J. Varanini was traveling home to Truckee after working New Year's Eve on the South Shore. CHP in the Truckee office could not say whether Varanini would be placed on administrative leave while NHP investigates the accident.

NHP Trooper Chuck Allen told *Lake Tahoe News* that Varanini swerved to try to avoid hitting the victim.

The accident occurred at 12:44am Jan. 1.

Allen did not know if the pedestrian was trying to cross the street or was wandering in the highway. He said the victim appeared to have alcohol in his system.

There is no crosswalk in this area of the four-lane highway east of Kingsbury Grade near Lake Village. And it is dark, with minimal or no lighting.

Other law enforcement news:

The names of the Incline Village residents who were killed

Friday walking across Highway 28 have been released. They are husband and wife – 46-year-old Robert C. Mathis and 46-year-old Linda Mathis.

Officers on the South Shore are reporting most of the New Year's Eve revelry in the casino area and at the SnowGlobe Music Festival at Lake Tahoe Community College being uneventful from a law enforcement perspective.

About 30,000 people were in the casino area, down from previous years. This is attributed to the nearly 10,000 who were at SnowGlobe New Year's Eve. (More than 9,500 attended the first night and more than 10,000 the second night.)

Highway 50 in front of the casinos was closed about 10:30pm, as is customary. But the masses did not fill the roadway until just before midnight when people streamed out of the casinos. The road reopened about 12:30am.

Douglas County sheriff's deputies arrested 10 people in casino area on charges of battery, domestic battery, battery on a peace officer, disorderly conduct, trespassing, minor consuming alcohol and civil protective custody. One person was arrested outside the casino core area on driving under the influence charges.

South Lake Tahoe officers arrested two people for public intoxication and El Dorado sheriff's deputies made four public intoxication arrests – all in the Stateline area.

Four people were also arrested at SnowGlobe Saturday night for public intoxication.

"The two nights before there were some drunk cases – nothing really significant or unexpected," South Lake Tahoe Police Chief Brian Uhler told *Lake Tahoe News* of SnowGlobe. "The entire three days the crime levels were minimal."

The promoters of SnowGlobe do face criminal charges for going

beyond the time limit of their permit on the second night. Uhler said they have been cited and his department will follow up with the El Dorado County District Attorneys Office.