

Alcohol, speed linked to crash that killed four Alberta teens

Victims all played for same high school football team

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Alcohol and speed are believed to be factors in a Saturday morning collision south of Grande Prairie that killed four teens and critically injured a 15-year-old boy, all of whom played for the same high school football team.

Police were called just after midnight, after a pickup truck driven by a 21-year-old man collided with a car carrying five teenage boys, said RCMP Cpl. Carol McKinley.

The teens, all students at Grande Prairie Composite high school, were driving on Highway 668, an industrial road, about two kilometres east of Highway 40 when the vehicles collided.

Dead are Mathew Deller and Vincent Stover, both 16, and Walter Borden-Wilkins and Tanner Hildebrand, both 15.

Fifteen-year-old Zak Judd was critically injured and taken to an Edmonton area hospital.

Stover joined his first football team when he was seven years

old, said his grandmother, Sheila Wilson.

"He was the littlest guy on the team, but he loved it anyways," she said.

This summer, Stover was working for a local carpenter to save money for a trip to San Diego with the Warriors, Grande Prairie Composite's football team.

Stover and some of his friends from the football team were on their way home from a party when their car was struck by the pickup truck, Wilson said.

Friends of the teens planned to hold a vigil at a local football field Saturday night, Wilson said.

Students will wear the football team's black and orange colours when they return to classes next week.

Grande Prairie Mayor Bill Given, who was born and raised in the city, said he cannot recall another time when a single crash claimed so many young lives.

"It's obviously a tragic loss. I think the community right now is still in a little bit of shock. Grande Prairie isn't a small town, but we do have a very close-knit community," Given said.

Grande Prairie Composite High School is one of two high schools in the city, and the only public secondary school.

"It will affect a significant number of the school-age kids in the community," Given said.

The driver of the pickup truck,

also from Grande Prairie, fled the scene of the collision, but was arrested a short time later, police said.

He remains in custody and charges are pending.

William Vavrek, a photographer in Grande Prairie, arrived at the scene of the crash about 20 minutes after the accident was reported.

"There was a crushed car, there were two engine trucks and a dozen

firefighters taking people out of the vehicle," said Vavrek. "There was actually a bunch of teenagers on the side of the road."

Vavrek said the car was in the south ditch of the road, across the street from Kinetic Transport Ltd. Police took the memory card from his camera, he said.

The deadly crash comes less than a week after four teens from a small town in southern Alberta were killed

in a single-vehicle rollover.

Before dawn last Sunday, paramedics and police found a car upside down and partially submerged in a creek east of Magrath, 32 kilometres south of Lethbridge.

The victims of that accident were two 16-year-old boys and two 14-year-old girls. Initial investigations of the mishap pointed to speed and driving inexperience, not alcohol.