



## **EUREKA POLICE DEPARTMENT**

604 C Street • Eureka, California 95501-0341

(707) 441-4060 • Fax (707) 441-4334

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# **PRESS RELEASE**

**Sgt. Brian Stephens**

**(707) 441-4081**

**bstephens@ci.eureka.ca.gov**

**April 20, 2013**

## **Injury Traffic Collision at 4<sup>th</sup> and “R” Street**

On 04-20-13 an Officer with the Eureka Police Department was conducting a traffic stop in the parking lot of a business at 4<sup>th</sup> and “R” Streets when he heard a violent collision occur behind him at the intersection. The Officer turned to see two (2) vehicles spinning wildly through the intersection. One involved vehicle, a Jeep Cherokee, then tried driving from the scene, traveling south on “R” Street in the north bound lanes, again losing control and striking a PG&E power pole. This collision caused several lines to dislodge from the pole and spark. The occupants of the Jeep, Carmen Maria Hernandez (29 of Eureka) and her two (2) children, ages 5 and 6 months were safely removed from the vehicle and the area was cordoned off for safety reasons.

The initial investigation has revealed Hernandez was traveling south on “R” Street from the Manila area and was driving erratically, weaving, as she crossed the three (3) spans of the Samoa Bridges. As she neared the intersection with 4<sup>th</sup> Street she turned as if she was going to turn across the north bound lanes of “R” Street, possibly into a business, but instead accelerated and continued south on “R” Street but now driving in the north bound lanes. Hernandez failed to stop at the red light and struck a white sedan that was west bound on 4<sup>th</sup> Street. Both vehicles spun through the intersection before stopping at the south west corner. Hernandez then began revving her engine and struggled with the transmission before eventually driving south on “R” Street in the north bound lanes, traveling onto the sidewalk, and striking the power pole. Given the severity of the collision and the hazardous conditions that existed, Humboldt Bay Fire and City Ambulance were summoned to the scene to assist and treat the injured.

Upon contact by the investigating Officers, Hernandez lied about her name and lied about her relationship with the two (2) juveniles that were in her vehicle. Eventually her true identity was discovered and Officers learned she had a felony warrant for her arrest out of Lake County for Burglary.

Given the information the investigating Officers received on scene about Hernandez’s erratic driving and her initial responses and mannerisms upon contact after the collision, an Officer had Hernandez perform a series of field sobriety and drug recognition tests. At the conclusion of the tests, the Officer determined Hernandez was operating a motor vehicle while under the influence of a controlled substance and prescription medication. Hernandez was arrested.

The occupants of the sedan were identified as two (2) adults and two (2) children (ages 1 and 3). The children were both seated in the rear seat and properly secured in car seats. Both children were transported to St. Joseph Hospital with minor injuries consisting of abrasions, most likely from flying glass, and some minor bruising. One of the adults also had a complaint of back pain.

Hernandez was arrested for driving while under the influence of a controlled substance and causing an injury (felony), child endangerment (felony), providing a false name to a Police Officer (misdemeanor) and driving while on a suspended license (misdemeanor). She was also booked on the felony warrant out of Lake County. Hernandez is being held on \$50,000 bail.

Officers on scene cared for Hernandez's two (2) children until CWS could arrive and arrange placement with a family member.

PG&E responded to the scene and ensured the power was disconnected in the area of the collision so the vehicle could be removed and the pole examined.

The Eureka Police Department would like to thank the witnesses to this collision who stayed on scene and provided valuable information to the investigating Officers. We would also like to thank the owners of the La Chaparrita restaurant who allowed us to move the children into their business while we cared for them. Anyone who witnessed this collision is encouraged to phone the Eureka Police Department and provide your information to Traffic Officer Chapman, 707-441-4044.

CARMEN HERNANDEZ

