



Ukiah Police Department

Safety, Professionalism, Community Service

Chris Dewey

Chief of Police

Press Release: Reported hit and run traffic collision in local drive-thru leads to DUI arrest. UPD case # 17-2508

On August 31st at about 6:56 pm, UPD officers responded with lights and sirens to McDonalds in the 100 block of North Orchard Avenue, to investigate a report of a vehicle ramming cars in the drive-thru at the location. While in-route, UPD dispatch advised that the suspect had pepper sprayed two civilians, who were attempting to detain him after the collision. Upon arrival, officers found the suspect's 1999 Silver Toyota Rav4 abandoned in the drive-thru, with it's airbags deployed. The vehicle was resting in a planter, against a light pole. The driver had fled and officers located him running northbound through the parking lot of JC Penny. When officers went to contact the driver, he refused to cooperate and had to be physically restrained. The driver was identified as Michael Blahut age 44, a Redwood Valley resident. During the subsequent investigation officers learned that Blahut was in the drive-thru, when he rear-ended a stopped 2016 Honda CRV and then drove his vehicle into a light pole. The manager of McDonalds went outside to contact Blahut, who was attempting to flee the scene. When the manager and a local citizen attempted to detain Blahut, Blahut pepper sprayed both and fled. As officers were dealing with Blahut, he was found to be intoxicated. Blahut was placed under arrest for misuse of pepper spray, hit and run, resisting arrest and DUI. Blahut's vehicle was towed from the scene and he was booked into county jail. Fortunately, no serious injuries were reported.

I would like to take this opportunity to provide some tips in reporting a suspected DUI driver:

- *Use a hands free type device to call 911 and tell the dispatcher you suspect a driver maybe impaired. (If you don't have a hands free device, safely pull over, park and then make the call).*
- *Be aware that you will be asked questions such as your location, the suspect vehicle location, direction of travel, vehicle description, license plate number, manner in which the vehicle is being driven, etc...Be patient with the dispatcher as they are often talking with you and dispatching officers to respond at the same time.*
- *Don't follow too close to the suspected impaired driver or attempt to stop the suspect vehicle yourself.*

As always, our mission at UPD is simple: to make Ukiah as safe as possible. If you would like to know more about crime in your neighborhood, you can sign up for telephone, cell phone and email notifications by clicking the Nixle button on our website: www.ukiahpolice.com.