

Drunk school bus driver receives felony charges

Written by Staff Reports

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Case turned over to FBI; driver on recognizance

An investigation by the McKinley County Sheriff's Office and the Navajo Nation Police resulted in the arrest of a former Chichiltah-Jones Ranch Community School bus driver on charges of felony child abuse after he took students on a drunken bus ride.

According to tribal police reports, Duane Aaron Skeet, 48, picked up 18 students, ages 5 through 14, on the afternoon of Sept. 24 and drove them home while intoxicated, causing many of them to cry and plead for him to stop the bus.

School officials said they received reports from parents shortly after Skeet began his route. The parents said as Skeet dropped children off, they ran up to their parents crying and telling them their bus driver was drunk.

One of the parents, when told of the situation, got in her vehicle and drove after the bus.

When she was able to get Skeet to stop, she confronted him and confiscated the bus keys. The three remaining children on the bus immediately ran out of it.

When MCSO Deputy Monty Yazzie arrived at the scene, Skeet agreed to take a portable breath alcohol test and he blew a .172. The legal limit on the reservation is .10.

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Since the arrest was made on the reservation, Skeet was turned over to tribal police who arrested him on charges of DWI and endangerment of children.

When interviewed by police, students said they were scared and crying as Skeet drove along the route, swerving.

At one point, they said, the bus nearly flipped over as Skeet took a curve too quickly. He reportedly hit something that damaged the bus door and kept it from closing.

Skeet admitted to drinking four tall cans of beer earlier in the day. When asked why he came to work drunk, he said he had to because there was a shortage of bus drivers.

The case has been turned over to the FBI and Skeet was charged with major child abuse in federal district court. He is currently out on his own recognizance.