

Gallup vehicular homicide suspect will proceed to trial

Written by Staff Reports

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New Mexico Attorney General Hector Balderas announced Dec. 5 that Gallup Magistrate Court Judge Virginia A. Yazzie found probable cause to believe Mathew Vargas committed a second degree felony resulting in death on Oct. 14, 2017 for a head-on vehicular homicide on Highway 118 near Gallup.

Evidence was presented that Vargas suddenly veered across the center line into oncoming traffic, when he struck and killed motorist, Ernest Baker, in the other lane. Vargas' car contained a half empty bottle of Goldschlager Whiskey. Additionally, three Xanax pills were found in the defendant's pants pockets. A blood test confirmed Vargas had excessive amounts of Xanax in his system at the time of the collision.

"Protecting New Mexicans from reckless drivers who consume controlled substances before hitting the road is a top priority for my office," Balderas said. "I look forward to pursuing justice on behalf of the victim's family."

Vargas' case will be bound over to Eleventh Judicial District Court for trial on the charges. A District Court Judge will be assigned the case. This case is being prosecuted by Assistant Attorneys General Ashley Schweizer and Bryan McKay. If convicted, Vargas faces 15 years in prison.

This charge is an allegation. The defendant is presumed innocent until conviction.