



OFFICE OF THE  
**DISTRICT ATTORNEY**

COUNTY OF SHASTA

Robert J. Maloney  
*Assistant District Attorney*

**Gerald C. Benito**  
*District Attorney*

**PRESS RELEASE**  
**Charges Filed in Death of Pedestrian**  
**1/29/09**

Shasta County District Attorney Jerry Benito announced today that he has filed charges related to the death of Linda Runyon who was killed while crossing the street at the intersection of Tehama Street and Court Street on 12/10/08. Susan Degen has been charged with a misdemeanor violation of Vehicular Manslaughter Without Gross Negligence in violation of Penal Code Section 192(c)(2), and two infractions for failing to yield the right of way to pedestrians. Linda Runyon and Lori Beyelia are the victims in the two infraction charges. The charge of misdemeanor vehicular manslaughter is based on Ms. Degen's failure to see and yield to the two pedestrians as they crossed Court Street in the cross walk at the intersection of Tehama Street and Court Street. All parties had "green" lights. No alcohol or drugs were involved.

Under the law, traffic collision deaths caused by a driver who fails to abide by a traffic rule such as failing to yield to a pedestrian, can generally only be charged with a misdemeanor offense unless the act was done with gross negligence or the driver was under the influence of alcohol or drugs. The law does not provide for any charge other than an infraction for nonfatal injuries- no matter how serious- that are caused by a driver who violates a traffic rule without anything more. Therefore, the only charge applicable related to the injuries caused to Lori Beyelia is the infraction of failing to yield to a pedestrian- the equivalent of a traffic ticket.

The misdemeanor vehicular manslaughter charge carries a maximum of 1 year in the county jail and fines. Generally, those convicted of this offense receive community service in lieu of jail, however, jail is an option for the judge if warranted. The "failure to yield" infraction offenses carry only a fine. As is our office policy, District Attorney Benito met with family members of Linda Runyon to seek their thoughts before the filing of the manslaughter charges.

A letter has been sent to Ms. Degen informing her that a criminal complaint has been filed and requesting that she contact the court to set a court date. For questions, contact District Attorney Jerry Benito at 245-6310.