



OFFICE OF THE  
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COUNTY OF SHASTA

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**PRESS RELEASE**  
**MAN CONVICTED OF DRIVING UNDER THE INFLUENCE OF MARIJUANA AND**  
**CAUSING GREAT BODILY INJURY**  
**June 24, 2010**

On June 24, 2010, a jury convicted Paul Wells, 39, of driving under the influence of marijuana and causing injury. The jury also found true that he caused great bodily injury to three young women and injured a fourth woman as well.

On April 7, 2008, Wells was driving 65 mph on Highway 44 at approximately 2:00 p.m., he was approaching Palo Cedro when he drove over the double yellow line right into the path of an oncoming vehicle and hit that vehicle head on. The vehicle that was struck was carrying four teenage females traveling to a softball game. Three of the victims, Trisha M., Tiffany M., and Tawny M. were all very seriously injured. Trisha M. suffered a fractured femur which required surgery to repair, a fractured wrist, broken ribs and a punctured lung. Tiffany M. suffered a crushed skull which required an emergency craniotomy (the removal of a piece of her skull for eight months), hearing loss, vision loss, and therapy to learn to walk again. Tawny M. suffered a fracture of all of her sinuses, broke her wrist, fractured her ribs, and had a punctured lung. A fourth victim Aimee M., received injuries to her leg and hip. Fortunately, all the victims are recovering, but are still receiving ongoing medical treatment.

The cause of the collision was that Wells was driving under the influence of marijuana. He had recently smoked the marijuana, and still had a large amount in his system when his blood was tested two hours after the collision. The blood draw showed that he had 6.9 ng of active THC in his blood. Nevada currently makes it a crime for a driver to have greater than 2.0 ng of THC in their blood. There is no similar cutoff under California law but any amount of THC in your blood in California, which adversely affects your ability to drive a motor vehicle safely, violates California law. In this case, the jury found Wells' ability to drive was adversely affected by the marijuana he had used. The marijuana in Wells system caused him to doze off, and he drove into oncoming traffic. This case is an example that driving under the influence of marijuana can cause very serious repercussions.

Wells faces up to thirteen years in prison on his sentencing date on July 30, 2010. This case was investigated by California Highway Patrol officer Curt Rhyne and prosecuted by Deputy District Attorney Michael Hemker. Victim assistance was provided by Barbara Dorris.