

ALERT

TOP STORY

Stafford man pleads guilty in fatal Spotsylvania crash

Keith Epps

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A man who killed one man and badly injured another while driving intoxicated in Spotsylvania County in 2019 pleaded guilty to two charges Tuesday.

William R. Garretson, 28, of Stafford County, pleaded guilty in Spotsylvania Circuit Court to aggravated involuntary manslaughter and DUI-maiming. As part of a plea agreement, two other charges were dropped.

Garretson will face the possibility of up to 25 years in prison when he is sentenced at a later date. The manslaughter conviction requires a mandatory minimum of a year in prison.

According to the evidence presented by prosecutor Stephanie Fitzgerald, 61-year-old Nelson Bowler was driving west on Tidewater Trail near Slaughter Pen Farm the afternoon of Sept. 2, 2019. His longtime friend, Welford Lewis Jr., was in the passenger seat.

Garretson was heading east when he swerved across the double yellow line and struck Bowler's vehicle. Bowler was killed immediately and Lewis suffered significant injuries, including a shattered sternum, broken ribs and a punctured lung.

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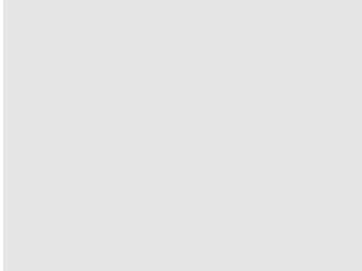
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Court records state that a witness reported he had been following Garretson's vehicle prior to the crash. He told police that after seeing Garretson swerving, he honked his horn in an effort to get him to pull over.

That witness said that when he went to assist Garretson after the crash, the defendant told him he was “high as a kite.”

Court records state that Garretson told emergency workers that he had snorted heroin the night before and had been on his phone just before the crash. Blood tests revealed fentanyl and THC in his system.

Attorney Ghislaine Storr Burks is representing Garretson.



William R. Garretson

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