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Mountie in fatal crash didn't have lights or sirens on

Probe could take months, police say

BY TOM ZYTARUK, SURREY NOW FEBRUARY 3, 2011

The Surrey RCMP officer involved in a fatal collision Monday night in Whalley had not been heading to a dispatched call nor did he have his emergency sirens or lights on when he ran into an 18-year-old woman on King George Boulevard, preliminary findings of a police investigation suggest.

The constable, whose name has not been revealed, has two years' experience with the force.

He was driving in the 9800-block of King George at about 9:40 p.m. when his patrol car hit the teenager as she was attempting to cross the road.

The victim, whose name has also not been released, was pronounced dead at a regional hospital, the name of which has not been disclosed.

Surrey RCMP Cpl. Drew Grainger said the woman was not at a crosswalk when she was struck.

The constable involved was not injured.

Abbotsford police are investigating the crash.

The rationale behind having an outside force conduct the investigation is to remove any perception of bias, said Surrey RCMP Insp. Garry Begg.

"I suppose it's just an abundance of caution on our part," he said.

Sgt. Peter Thiessen, a senior spokesman for RCMP policing the Lower Mainland, added it's important for the Surrey detachment to be seen to "remain at arm's length" when its own are being investigated because "the media and public are quick to criticize that we investigated ourselves."

Const. Ian MacDonald, spokesman for the Abbotsford police, said Tuesday that preliminary findings indicate "it doesn't appear" that the constable had been driving to a dispatched call or had his emergency equipment -- such as lights or sirens -- on at the time.

The victim, he noted, was "by all accounts a good citizen."

Abbotsford police rebuilt the crash scene on Tuesday. Mac-Donald said their report could take months to complete.

"We will be providing updates to this investigation as we go along," he said.

MacDonald said investigators are doing a mechanical inspection on the car and will also be looking at data contained inside its on-board computer.

MacDonald said it's up to the Surrey RCMP to decide what to do about the constable's duty status in the meantime.

Begg said such decisions will be "made over time."

"This investigation is still in its very early stages," he said.

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