

NEWS RELEASE



Monmouth County Prosecutor's Office
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Luis A. Valentin, Prosecutor

OCEAN TOWNSHIP MAN SENTENCED TO 3 YEARS IN PRISON FOR KNOWINGLY LEAVING THE SCENE OF A FATAL MOTOR VEHICLE COLLISION

On August 27, 2010, Dineshkumar Patel, 39, of Ocean Township, N.J., was sentenced to a three year State Prison term for the second degree crime of **Knowingly Leaving the Scene of a Motor Vehicle Accident Resulting in Death**. The charge stems from a fatal motor vehicle *versus* pedestrian hit-and-run collision which occurred during the early morning hours of August 25, 2009, on State Highway 33 in Howell Township, N.J. As a result of Patel's actions, Thomas Kovacs, 59, of Howell Township, N.J., died.

A joint investigation into Mr. Kovacs death was conducted by the Monmouth County Prosecutor's Office, the Howell Township Police Department and the Serious Collision Analysis Response Team ("S.C.A.R.T."). The investigation revealed that Patel was operating his work truck and traveling westbound on State Highway 33 when he allowed his truck to drift onto the shoulder, at which time the truck struck Mr. Kovacs, who was walking along the side of the roadway. At the time of the collision, Patel was making deliveries for his employer, a Freehold, N.J., area food and beverage business. Knowing that he struck something, Patel stopped at a nearby gas station to look at the damage to his work truck. The damage to the truck was significant. The truck impacted with Mr. Kovacs so forcefully that the passenger side mirror assembly was damaged, the passenger door was bent, and the window in the passenger door shattered. Patel did not return to the area of the collision and he did not report the collision to the police, although he did report it to his supervisors at work.

Patel entered a guilty plea to the charge on June 28, 2010, pursuant to a negotiated plea agreement. The guilty plea was entered before Monmouth County Superior Court Judge Jamie S. Perri, who also imposed the sentence. The terms of the negotiated plea agreement provided for the Monmouth County Prosecutor's Office to recommend that Judge Perri sentence Patel to the three year State Prison term.

Patel has been held in the Monmouth County Correctional Institution in lieu of bail in the amount of \$75,000, "cash only," since his arrest on September 1, 2009. As part of the sentence, Patel was legally entitled to, and granted, credit for the 359 days he spent in custody prior to being sentenced.

Monmouth County Prosecutor Luis A. Valentin stated, "I commend the law enforcement personnel whose cooperative efforts resulted in the prompt identification of Patel as the individual responsible for Mr. Kovacs death, and in the successful prosecution of Patel for the crime which he committed."

The case was assigned to Assistant Monmouth County Prosecutor Jennifer Lipp of the Monmouth County Prosecutor's Office's Major Crimes Bureau. Patel was represented by Dwight Ransom, Esquire, of Neptune Township, N.J.

Released: August 27, 2010