

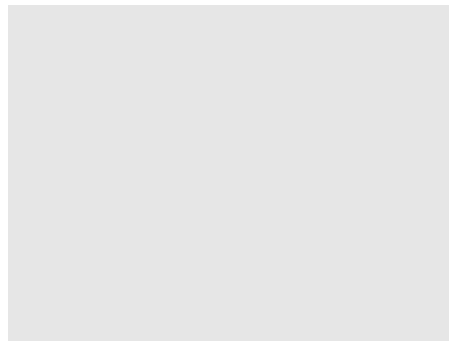
https://www.santafenewmexican.com/news/local_news/santa-fe-police-reports-say-pickup-driver-ran-red-light-in-fatal-june-bicycle-crash/article_7a9f9490-bd1f-4d70-a6bd-ec845458ebff.html

Santa Fe police reports say pickup driver ran red light in fatal June bicycle crash

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Competitive cyclist and regular pickleball player Steven Ballinger, 42, was a in Santa Fe. Police reports released Monday by the city indicate the driver ran a traffic light just before the collision.

Courtesy of Annie Maes

Police reports released Monday by the city of Santa Fe indicate a bicyclist who was killed in a June crash at one of the city's busiest intersections was struck by a pickup driver who had run a traffic light.

Santa Fe police determined the driver was at fault in the June 18 crash that killed 42-year-old cyclist Steven Ballinger — a Santa Fe resident who was mourned by the city's vibrant pickleball community — at the intersection of Cerrillos Road and Osage Avenue. The pickup driver, identified as 27-year-old Sebastian Crespo, was cited for careless driving and having no proof of insurance.

Several witnesses told investigators Ballinger was traveling southbound on Cerrillos Road and had entered the intersection when the light was green, according to the police reports. Crespo was driving a white Toyota Tacoma northbound on Cerrillos and making a left turn onto Osage — against the traffic signal — when he struck Ballinger, the witnesses told police.

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Police wrote Crespo stopped after the crash to check on the cyclist and waited for responders to arrive at the scene.

Crespo told officers he had seen Ballinger traveling south in the bike lane “right before impact,” and the cyclist struck his vehicle on the backseat passenger door, the lead investigator wrote in his report. The investigator noted Crespo said he was unable to see the bicycle lane because another vehicle was occupying the lane next to it and preparing to turn right onto Osage.

Crespo faced counts of careless driving, a misdemeanor, and lack of insurance, according to a citation filed by Santa Fe police in late June. The latter charge — also called mandatory financial responsibility — was dismissed after Crespo provided proof of insurance, Santa Fe Municipal Court records show. Crespo pleaded no contest to the count of careless driving, and the sentence was deferred.

The Santa Fe police investigator wrote in a report Crespo said he was not under the influence of drugs or alcohol. “I did not notice any signs or clues of impairment on Mr. Crespo,” the officer wrote.

At least two witnesses who saw the crash told police the driver had cut off all of the southbound traffic on Cerrillos when making the left turn that resulted in the fatal crash.

Both witnesses — who were driving southbound on Cerrillos at the time of the crash — told police their light turned green and they entered the intersection, and then stopped abruptly when the pickup turned in front of them, reports state. One of the drivers told investigators he saw the cyclist enter the intersection at “full speed” on a solid green light.

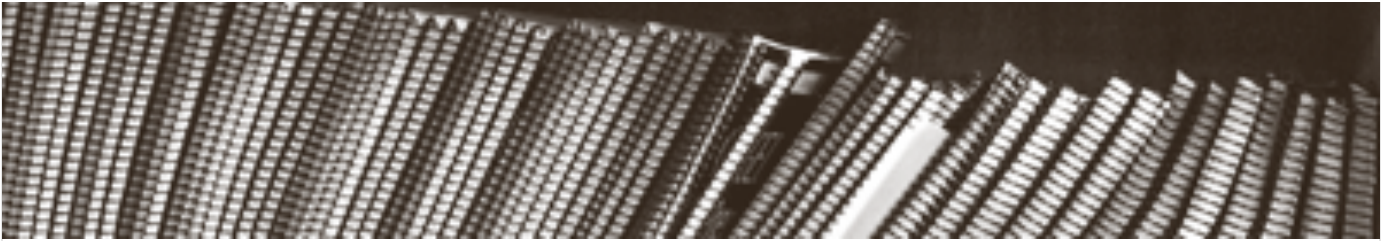
The lead investigator received video footage from a nearby business that showed Crespo’s vehicle driving up Cerrillos Road shortly before the crash; there was “nothing unusual about the vehicle’s speed or movement,” the report states.

He determined there was probable cause to charge Crespo with careless driving, which state law defines as driving in a “careless, inattentive or imprudent manner,” the investigator wrote.

He determined, however, there was not evidence to charge Crespo with reckless driving, which is defined as driving “carelessly and heedlessly in willful or wanton disregard of the rights or safety of others.”

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