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## Alcohol blamed in crash that killed 4 from Jasper

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Staff writer

Alcohol and a distraction caused the crash that killed four Jasper young people late last week, State Police said today.

The four had been attending a party involving alcohol in a rural area last Friday. Their bodies were found Monday three miles south of Canisteo.

The driver, David Cady, 17, had a blood alcohol level of 0.13 percent, State Police Maj. Steven White said at a news conference at Troop E headquarters in Bath. One passenger also had an alcohol level exceeding 0.08 percent, the level at which state law considers someone drunk, but the level was not as high as Cady's. The other two had lower blood alcohol levels.

At that blood alcohol level, White said, a 17-year-old "is very intoxicated," more so than an adult who might be heavier or more used to alcohol. In addition, Cady was driving illegally, at hours not permitted under terms of his junior license.

White said one young adult, not present at the party, was suspected of having provided alcohol to some of the party-goers, and misdemeanor charges of unlawfully dealing with a minor were being considered. Some of the party-goers also brought alcohol, possibly from their homes. However, White said, no parents were considered complicit. Only one person at the party was of age.

Cady, Tiara O'Dell, 17, Jered Fry, 15, and Joe Lubberts, 21, were reported missing Saturday after O'Dell and Fry didn't show up for Jasper-Troutsborg homecoming soccer games. O'Dell had been crowned homecoming queen just hours earlier.

Hundreds of firefighters, Steuben County deputies, forest rangers, troopers and community volunteers searched for the young people Sunday and Monday. The cell phone carried by one of the teens helped narrow the search area, but in the end, their vehicle was found by a passing motorist.

The last sighting of the four was about 3 a.m. Saturday at the Acorn Market in Canisteo. The spot where they died is about three miles south of the market on state Route 248.

White said the crash probably happened shortly after 3 a.m., when an area resident reported hearing a sound like a tree limb cracking.

He said the vehicle was traveling south on Route 248 when the car drifted, hit a guard rail, became airborne and struck a concrete abutment. It came to rest on its side near a creek. The vehicle was not submerged because of the low water level in the creek.

Two of the people in the vehicle died upon impact and the other two shortly afterward. White said the Monroe County Medical Examiner's Office reported that "it was too horrific a crash" for the other two to have survived even if they had gotten immediate medical help.

White said the driver had become distracted, possibly passing around the food the four had just purchased. He said the cell phones were not being used, so that was not the cause of the distraction.

Speed was not a factor, White said; the vehicle was traveling less than 50 mph.

When asked what message he would like teenagers to carry away from this, White said, "Don't drink and drive, and recognize the hazards of driving ... and how quickly lives can change.

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