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## Report: Victims drank at bars

Troopers say 2 young women were at Albany taverns; SUV ignored several warnings before fatal I-787 crash

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ALBANY -- Carrying an older friend's identification, 19-year-old Sara Epstein drank in two bars before getting into a July 11 drunken-driving accident that killed her and her friend Alicia Quintana, State Police have concluded.

Epstein and Quintana, 21, had blood-alcohol content that was triple the legal limit at the time of the crash shortly before 4 a.m.

The two women were apparently so drunk they ignored multiple warnings from other drivers that they were heading the wrong way on I-787, State Police said in their final report Wednesday on the cause of the accident.

Police said there would be no charges against the two bars, the Stone Crow at 492 Yates St. and Sadie Klutz's at 849 Madison Ave.

"She had someone else's valid ID," said State Police Capt. Bill Sprague. "She bears a very, very close resemblance to this person."

If the bars had asked Epstein for proof of her age -- and it's not clear they did, he said -- she would have been able to present what appeared to be her valid ID.

"We don't have probable cause to arrest anybody at the bar for anything," Sprague said.

A week after the accident, however, the Albany County District Attorney's Office, the State Liquor Authority and the Department of Motor Vehicles raided both bars and arrested two bartenders and six underage female drinkers. All eight were charged with a misdemeanor of either selling to underage drinkers, possessing alcohol with intent to consume or having identification of another person.

No charges will be filed against the woman whose identification was used, Sprague said.

"The friend is telling us she didn't give her the ID to use, and Sara Epstein must have taken the ID out of her (friend's) purse," Sprague said.

Epstein and Quintana were killed after Epstein drove a Chevrolet Blazer northbound in the southbound lane of I-787 for 2.8 miles.

Their SUV entered the highway at the Madison Avenue, which is at a difficult angle, police said.

"A sober person would have realized right away there was something wrong," Sprague said. "Then she passed three sets of wrong way signs."

The report gave this account of what followed:

At the top of the ramp, Epstein narrowly missed hitting a southbound tractor-trailer, which sounded its air horn and flashed its lights in an effort to alert her. Three other vehicles pulled over to the right shoulder to avoid her, and two other drivers on the northbound side saw her, sounded their horns and flashed their lights.

Epstein kept driving north until she came to a curve just north of the exit for I-90, where her SUV crashed into a tanker truck driving south in the left lane and second tanker in the middle lane.

At the time, Epstein was driving about 43 mph on a highway with a speed limit of 55. She and Quintana were killed instantly.

"The tragedy is compounded by the fact that there were people who tried to warn them they were going the wrong way," Sprague said.

Both women worked as waitresses at the Red Lobster on Wolf Road in Colonie. Epstein, the daughter of Troy Police Sgt. Ronald Epstein, was a 2006 graduate of Lansingburgh High School and attended Hudson Valley Community College. Quintana had just completed her junior year at the College of Saint Rose, where she studied music.

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