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## Two Killed in Christmas Day Veterans Drive Crash as VIPD Warns Speeding and Distraction Are Costing Lives

Police Chief Deborah Hodge said preliminary findings point to speed in a Christmas Day crash that killed a driver and pedestrian on Veterans Drive, urging motorists to slow down, stay sober, and eliminate distractions before tragedy strikes again.

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Scene of Veterans Drive accident that resulted in the death of two individuals. By. V.I. CONSORTIUM.

ST. THOMAS — Two people were killed in a Veterans Drive crash on Christmas Day (Thursday), prompting St. Thomas Chief of Police Deborah Hodge to warn that preliminary

findings point to speeding, and she urged motorists to slow down, stay sober, and eliminate distractions behind the wheel.

Hodge, who spoke to The Consortium on Friday, said she happened to pass the scene shortly after the crash occurred, an experience she described as deeply impacting and one that reinforced the urgency of the department's ongoing safety messaging.

Hodge said the VIPD extends its condolences to the victims' families. Based on preliminary findings, speed appears to have been a contributing factor. While there is no direct indication at this stage that impairment played a role, she said autopsies are pending and will provide greater clarity as investigators work to determine all contributing circumstances.

According to the VIPD Director of Communications Glen Dratte, the crash occurred on Veterans Drive in the vicinity of Rue de St. Barthelemy. Investigators said a vehicle was traveling westbound when the operator lost control, mounted the curb, and continued moving west along the sidewalk, where it struck a pedestrian on the southern side of the roadway.

After striking the pedestrian, the vehicle left the sidewalk and came to rest in the westbound lane, facing southeast. Both the driver and the pedestrian sustained critical injuries and were later pronounced deceased. The identities of the victims have not been released.

The chief emphasized that the crash illustrates how quickly lives can be lost and how irreversible the consequences can be. In this case, she noted, investigators cannot speak with either party involved because both lost their lives, eliminating any opportunity for reflection or corrective behavior after the fact.

Hodge stressed that responsible driving extends beyond simply reducing speed. She said motorists must remain fully attentive at all times, including obeying stop signs and traffic signals and avoiding distractions such as mobile phones or even prolonged conversation while driving. Distraction, she explained, takes many forms and can be just as dangerous as reckless speed.

She described the scene as stark and sobering, with emergency responders performing CPR and victims lying in the roadway, adding that preliminary findings suggest the crash may have been preventable. Too often, she said, drivers move through daily routines without considering the consequences of their actions until it is too late.

The incident also served as a reminder, Hodge said, of why VIPD conducts frequent traffic enforcement initiatives. These efforts, which target issues such as unregistered vehicles, seat belt compliance, and other violations, are often dismissed by motorists who question the purpose of traffic stops. However, she said those encounters can uncover conditions that allow officers to intervene before a tragedy occurs.

Hodge urged the public to view traffic enforcement not as an inconvenience, but as a preventative measure designed to protect lives. When officers are visible on the roads, she said, it is part of a broader effort to reduce dangerous behavior and prevent exactly the kind of loss seen in this case.