

Police investigate tragic accident that killed baby

Staff Report

The family of a 23-month-old Ruston girl is mourning her death after a vehicle accident Sunday.

Preliminary results from a Ruston Police investigation indicate that 32-year-old Chastity Tucker had her 2000 Lincoln Navigator parked in the front yard of her house at 403 W. Georgia Ave. on Sunday evening.

While Tucker was listening to music and cooking outside, police said her 23-month-old daughter was standing nearby with her stepdad when Tucker got into her vehicle and began to pull forward.

Ruston Police Public Information Officer Lt. Curtis Hawkins said Tucker said she heard a "bump" and got out of the vehicle to see if she had hit anything. Tucker then observed her 23-month-old daughter lying next to the vehicle.

Ruston Ambulance Service transported the child to the Northern Louisiana Medical Center Emergency Room. She was then airlifted by Life-Air Rescue to LSU Medical Center in Shreveport, where she died from her injuries shortly after arrival.

Hawkins said it's standard procedure in the case of fatalities to administer chemical tests to see if there is anything

in the driver's system. He said tests are pending in this case.

The child's stepdad, Daniel Arenas-Arroyo, said he received a cell phone call and did not see the child leave his side, Hawkins said.

Earlier in the week, Ruston Police responded to another accident in which a child was struck by a vehicle.

On Sept. 30, police responded to La Mesa subdivision, where a 3-year-old had been struck by a vehicle. Hawkins said Melissa Smith, mother of the child, said a relative was backing out of the driveway and struck her child. This child sustained serious but non-life-threatening injuries and was also airlifted to LSU Medical Center.

"In one week's time, two very young children have been struck by vehicles at their own houses," Hawkins said. "One family is rejoicing in the fact that their child survived and they will have another chance of life with her. Today, another family is mourning their loss of their 23-month-old child."

Hawkins said the Ruston Police Department urges parents, relatives, friends and anyone who is around small children to slow down, pay attention and stay focused when watching after the well-being of children.

Hawkins said no charges have been brought against either driver at this time.