

Family of suspected high driver talks about crash with 8 kids

By Natasha Chen

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MARYSVILLE, Wash. — A 16-year-old girl will likely face a vehicular assault charge after a bizarre car accident on State Route 9, just north of Marysville in Snohomish County.

Washington State Patrol troopers believe Samantha Weldon was high on marijuana when she was driving her family home from her grandparents' house before 1 a.m. Saturday.

The teen driver was in a Chevrolet Tahoe with her aunt and uncle and eight children. Troopers believe that the aunt and uncle were both intoxicated and that is the reason the teen was driving.

The uncle, 27-year-old Jeremy Weldon, suddenly decided to jump from the moving vehicle, which was going about 55 miles an hour. The teenage driver slammed on the brakes and was hit by two vehicles.

A Chevrolet Trailblazer hit her vehicle first. A 66-year-old woman in that car broke her leg. A Ford Mustang then hit the Tahoe. People in that car declined medical treatment.

The uncle suffered a serious head injury and was airlifted to Harborview Medical Center in Seattle.

His family said he was recovering Saturday night and was able to talk. None of the eight children were hurt in the crash.

The Washington State Patrol said Jeremy Weldon and his wife had had a few drinks and were arguing in the car before he jumped out of it.

“He was just teasing, I’m going to jump out of the rig or whatever, and really didn’t mean to,” said Linda Weldon, his mother. She said they had all just left her house in Arlington to go back to their home in Marysville. Weldon said her granddaughter, who had recently earned her driver’s license, did the best she could under the stressful situation.

Because Weldon slammed on the brakes, troopers said that caused the other two cars to collide with them. Due to the nature of the 66-year-old woman’s injury, the Washington State Patrol will recommend Weldon be charged with vehicular assault.

Troopers said they will also recommend as many as eight counts of reckless endangerment, one for each child in the vehicle. Investigators are still looking into possible charges on the other adults involved.

Steve Weldon, Samantha's grandfather, said she should not be held responsible for the other people's injuries.

"You're supposed to be following at a safe distance so you can be in control of your vehicle. Obviously, they must have been too close," he said.

He also said he did not believe his granddaughter could have been smoking pot. He described her as a bright person and said he had just spoken with her before she left.