



OFFICE OF THE SHERIFF, Stephenson County

Steven M. Stovall, Sheriff

For Immediate Release
January 26th, 2023

Contact: Chief Deputy Andy Schroeder
815-235-8317
aschroeder@stephensoncountyil.gov

FATAL TRAFFIC CRASH INVESTIGATION

On January 26th, 2023, at approximately 7:17am, Stephenson County Sheriff's Office personnel responded to the area of Illinois Route 26 North and Old Route 26 in rural Orangeville for a report of a damaged vehicle off the roadway. Upon arrival, Thomas Zulke, aged 27 of Freeport, was found deceased near a severely damaged vehicle. No other vehicles or persons were involved.

The results of the preliminary investigation indicate that a vehicle driven by the decedent was traveling northbound on Illinois Route 26 south of Old Route 26 when it crossed over the southbound traffic lane, left the pavement, and traveled down a steep embankment on the west side of the roadway. After leaving the roadway, the vehicle became airborne, struck a tree, and came to rest approximately thirty (30) yards west of Illinois Route 26. During this process, the decedent was ejected from the vehicle.

The exact time the crash occurred is not known; however, it is believed to have occurred approximately twelve (12) hours before discovery. The location where the vehicle came to rest was difficult to see from the roadway due to terrain features and weather conditions. The Stephenson County Coroner's Office has scheduled an autopsy for January 27th, 2023.

The Stephenson County Sheriff's Office would like to extend our deepest condolences to the family and friends of Thomas Zulke for their tragic loss.

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LAW ENFORCEMENT/INVESTIGATION DIVISION

15 North Galena Avenue
Freeport, Illinois 61032
(815) 235-8252 • (815) 235-8257 • FAX (815) 235-8306

CORRECTIONAL DIVISION

1680 East Singer Drive
Freeport, Illinois 61032
(815) 235-8254 • FAX (815) 599-8452