



CITY OF MISSOULA POLICE DEPARTMENT

"Professionalism With Pride"

PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Update on Officer Involved Shooting

The Missoula Police Department (MPD) is now able to share the identities and status of the police officers who were involved in last night's events in the 700 block of East Broadway, which resulted in very serious injuries to one officer and a wounded suspect.

MPD Patrol Officer Deni Poling is the officer who was run over by the wanted parole violator, Dawnette Eaton, who was apparently attempting to escape from the officers when approached in her vehicle in the restaurant parking lot. Officer Poling was transported to St. Patrick's Hospital and underwent surgery for serious injuries sustained when the vehicle apparently knocked her to the ground and drove over her while trying to leave the scene. Poling has served 6 ½ years with the MPD and was previously a detention officer with the Missoula County Sheriff's Office.

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MPD Patrol supervisor, Lt. Rich Stepper, is the individual who had contact with Eaton and was attempting to identify her as the parole violator when she put her vehicle in gear, ignored Stepper's orders and accelerated to the rear striking Officer Poling. Stepper observed what was occurring and according to a public safety statement made to Chief Muir at the scene, Stepper drew his weapon and fired one shot at the suspect to stop the driver from causing further injury to Poling or himself. The suspect continued her flight from the scene while Stepper attended to his injured partner and summoned medical aid immediately. Lt. Stepper has served 21 years with MPD.

By department policy on this type of incident, Lt. Stepper is now on paid administrative leave while the MPD Office of Professional Standards conducts an internal review of the officer involved shooting. That may take several days to a week to complete. The Missoula County Sheriff's Office was asked to conduct the investigation into Eaton's criminal conduct during this event. Any information about potential charges against her should be directed to the MCSO Public Information Officer, who has been very helpful in communicating with the media and public about these disturbing events.

The Missoula Police Department appreciates the outpouring of interest and support for Officers Poling and Stepper, as well as the tips from the community that led to Eaton's apprehension early this morning. - END -