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Reaching for phone caused fatal crash

BY SHARON COOLIDGE • SCOOLIDGE@ENQUIRER.COM • NOVEMBER 30, 2009

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Arthur Stines died because a woman took her eyes off the road to pick a cell phone up off her car floor, according to Cincinnati police.

In that split second, Katrina Kimberly drifted off to the right side of a California road, then overcorrected and slammed into Stines' Buick LeSabre, police say.

Kimberly told officers at the scene: "The next thing I know, boom."

Cincinnati police Officer Bryan Dettmer, who investigated the crash, said it's not uncommon for cell phones to be at the root of crashes, though it's often difficult to prove.

Kimberly, 30, of Bethel, pleaded guilty Monday to a charge of vehicular homicide, a misdemeanor.

Deputy Cincinnati City Prosecutor Charlie Rubenstein shook his head in frustration, saying Stines, 53, of Walnut Hills didn't have to die. "If you are going to drive, drive," he said. "Don't fiddle with your phone."

Sentencing is set for Jan. 6.

At that time, Kimberly also faces a charge of driving under suspension in the July 3 crash.

In all, she could spend up to a year in jail.

The case has been under investigation for nearly six months while police awaited blood tests.

The results, which arrived late last month, showed Kimberly hadn't been drinking and although she had low levels of methadone in her system, it was not enough to impair her driving.

She was charged last week with the misdemeanor that alleged she was negligent at the time of the crash.


At about noon on July 3, Stines, with his brother Charles Stines in the passenger seat, was driving east on Kellogg Avenue, headed to River Downs.

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 The Enquirer/Sharon Coolidge
 Katrina Kimberly appeared in court Monday morning.

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At the same time, Kimberly was driving west in a 1994 Oldsmobile. When she reached for her phone, she lost control, clipped a car and hit Stines, Dettmer said.

Charles Stines said he never saw the crash coming. "He was such a good driver, I never looked at the road," he said.

