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NEWS RELEASE

HASTINGS MAN CHARGED WITH CRIMINAL VEHICULAR HOMICIDE

Dakota County Attorney James Backstrom announced that **Joseph Paul Czeck**, age 33 of Hastings, was charged* today with four counts of Criminal Vehicular Homicide in connection with a fatal crash that occurred on July 9, 2018, which took the lives of 67-year-old Karen Christiansen and 32-year-old Jena Christiansen, both of Shoreview. An 1,100 pound boulder fell off the back of the commercial truck Czeck was driving and struck the vehicle driven by Karen Christiansen. The driver of the truck continued to drive away and did not return to the scene of the accident.

The allegations contained in the criminal complaint reflect the following:

Shortly before 5:00 p.m. on July 9, the Rosemount Police Department responded to a crash at Rich Valley Boulevard and 125th Street in Rosemount. Responding officers determined that a Toyota Avalon had been hit by a boulder that became dislodged from a landscape truck. The driver and passenger in the Toyota suffered significant trauma and died at the scene.

After extensive investigation, Rosemount Detectives were able to identify Czeck Services as the company that owned the commercial vehicle involved in the crash. It was further determined that the Defendant, was the owner of the company and had been operating the vehicle near the time and location of the incident. Czeck was arrested in Inver Grove Heights on July 11, 2018.

Additional facts pertaining to this case can be found in the criminal complaint, which is located online at: <http://www.co.dakota.mn.us/LawJustice/CriminalComplaint/Pages/default.aspx>. While in custody, a mug shot can be viewed at: <https://www.co.dakota.mn.us/LawJustice/Jail/Pages/default.aspx>.

Backstrom extended his sympathies to the family and friends of Karen and Jena Christiansen. Backstrom commented: *"This was a senseless and avoidable tragedy that claimed two lives. Anyone involved in a vehicle crash must remain at the scene and contact law enforcement. Failure to do so could result in a felony."*

Backstrom thanked the Rosemount Police Department for their thorough investigation of this tragic crash. Backstrom also extended his appreciation to the Inver Grove Heights Police Department, Inver Grove Heights Fire Department, the Minnesota State Patrol, and the Dakota County Sheriff's Office for their assistance.

Czeck made his first appearance in court today and bail in the amount of \$ 70,000 without conditions (\$30,000 with conditions) was set by Dakota County District Court Judge Richelle Wahi. Czeck's next court appearance is set for October 4, 2018 at 9:00 a.m. in Hastings.

If you have questions, contact James Backstrom at 651-438-4440.

**Criminal charges are not evidence of guilt. A defendant/suspect is presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty.*