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**NEWS RELEASE**

**HASTINGS MAN PLEADS GUILTY TO CRIMINAL VEHICULAR HOMICIDE**

Dakota County Attorney James Backstrom announced that **Joseph Paul Czeck**, age 34 of Hastings, pled guilty today to two counts of Criminal Vehicular Homicide (Causes Collision and Leaves the Scene) 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 crash. Judge Arlene Perkkio ordered a pre-sentence investigation and set the sentencing date for January 17, 2020 at 1:30 p.m. in Hastings.

On July 9, 2018, shortly before 5:00 p.m., the Rosemount Police Department responded to a crash at Rich Valley Boulevard and 125<sup>th</sup> 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 and charged with four counts of Criminal Vehicular Homicide.

Additional facts pertaining to this case can be found in the criminal complaint at [Criminal Complaint Search](#). Prior news releases are available at [County Attorney News Releases](#). While in custody, a mug shot can be viewed at [Inmate Search](#).

Backstrom commented: *"We are pleased this individual has taken responsibility for this tragic crime which claimed two lives in our community."* Backstrom extended his sympathies to the family and friends of Karen and Jena Christiansen.

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, the Inver Grove Heights Fire Department, the Minnesota State Patrol, and the Dakota County Sheriff's Office for their assistance.

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