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State of Oregon v. Damon K. Johnson

Marion County Circuit Court Case 25CR38374

Marion County DA's Office Secures Accountability for Bicyclist Death

SALEM, OR (October 8, 2026) – Today, Marion County Circuit Court Judge Thomas Hart sentenced Damon Johnson (age 29), to 10 years/120 months in the Department of Corrections. This sentence is to be served pursuant to ORS 137.700 (Ballot Measure 11).

Ten years is both the minimum and maximum sentence available to the state in this case.

Johnson was found guilty of Manslaughter in the First Degree, Manslaughter in Second Degree, Driving Under the Influence of Intoxicants, Reckless Driving, Recklessly Endangering Another Person, and Violation of Open Container Laws, in connection with a July 10, 2025 crash on Delaney Road SE that killed Jeremy Wanak, a bicyclist.

At the time of his death, Wanak was a father of two and a Sprague High School science teacher.

On July 10, 2025, Marion County Sheriff's deputies responded to the scene on Delaney Road SE. Around 7:16 pm, Damon Johnson was driving eastbound when, while entering a 25 mph advisory curve at an excessive speed, he crossed the double line and struck Jeremy Wanak, who was riding his bicycle westbound in the correct lane of travel. Wanak died as a result of the injuries he sustained from the crash. During the investigation, deputies on scene noticed an odor of alcohol coming from the vehicle. Pursuant to a search warrant of Johnson's vehicle, deputies located three cans of beer that were open and nearly empty, one full unopened can of beer, as well as marijuana. Johnson denied consuming either alcohol or drugs.

Pursuant to a search warrant, Johnson's blood alcohol level was tested and found to be above the legal limit at 0.098%. His blood was also shown to have active components of recent cannabis consumption.

Johnson had a prior DUII and reckless driving conviction and multiple traffic violations.

Marion County Sheriff's Deputies were assisted by the Keizer Police Department as well as the Marion County District Attorney's Office in their investigation.

"DUIIs are entirely avoidable, which makes DUII fatalities especially tragic," said District Attorney Brendan Murphy. "I know that the victim's death in this case impacted numerous local communities and people of all ages, and our heart goes out to them today. I hope this conviction secures some measure of closure for the victim's family as they navigate life after facing this tragic loss."

The state was represented by Deputy District Attorneys Justin Barbot-Wheaton and Sarah Meyer in this case.

The Marion County District Attorney's Office wishes to recognize the thorough work of the Marion County Sheriff's Office, particularly the Marion County Inter-Agency Crash Reconstruction Team, as well as the Keizer Police Department.

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