

Beat: News

Drunk driver kills 6 pedestrians in northwest Poland

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USPA News - Six people were killed on New Year's Day when a drunk driver ran over a group of pedestrians on a sidewalk in northwestern Poland, officials said Thursday. Among the victims are a police officer and members of his family.

The accident occurred at approximately 1:20 p.m. local time on Wednesday when a speeding car left the road and struck a group of pedestrians near a railway crossing. It happened in the town of Kamie? Pomorski in West Pomeranian Voivodeship, located about 225 kilometers (139 miles) northwest of Poznan. "The preliminary findings show that the 26-year-old driver, for unexplained reasons, drove onto the sidewalk and hit a group of pedestrians," a police spokesperson said on Thursday, adding that five adults died at the scene while a child died in an air ambulance before reaching the hospital. The victims were identified as a 39-year-old off-duty Kamie? Pomorski police officer, his 35-year-old wife, their 8-year-old son, and three friends of the parents. Their two other children, a 10-year-old girl and a 9-year-old boy, were rushed to a hospital in Szczecin, where the boy remained in a critical condition on Thursday. "As it turned out, the 26-year-old was in a state of intoxication with nearly two per mil of alcohol content in his body. The man was arrested and was taken into police custody," the police spokesperson said. "This irresponsible young man took the lives of six innocent people, including a young child, and another boy is fighting for his life in hospital." The man's girlfriend, a 26-year-old woman, was with him in the car and was being questioned by police. Polish media reported Thursday that the woman told investigators that she was arguing with her boyfriend at the time of the accident. "I often heard them arguing and screaming," a neighbor of the suspect was quoted as saying. Kamie? Pomorski Mayor Bronisław Grzegorz Karpiński declared three days of mourning on Thursday, ordering flags to be flown at half-staff in the community and sirens to be sounded at noon on Friday. "I appeal to all residents of Kamie? Pomorski to keep mourning behavior from 2 to 4 January and to refrain from organizing events for entertainment," he said. Although the number of fatalities has decreased substantially over the past decade, drunk driving remains a serious problem in Poland. At least 265 people were killed and 2,726 others were injured in more than 2,000 accidents attributed to drunk driving in Poland in 2013, down from 676 deaths in 2000.

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