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Oktibbeha man held in fatal hit-and-run

The Associated Press

STARKVILLE — An Oktibbeha County man has been charged with three counts of vehicular manslaughter involving a hit-and-run crash that left three people dead.

Willie Gene Ivory, 48, was being held without bond in the county jail on Wednesday pending an initial court appearance.

Ivory is charged in the deaths of Torsia Denise Henderson, 28; Johnny Smith, 30; and Helen Smith Sullivan, 52, all of Oktibbeha County.

Authorities said the accident occurred Tuesday when Henderson's vehicle was hit by a minivan, veered off the road into a culvert and crashed head-on into an embankment. The minivan left the scene of the accident, said Sheriff Dolph Bryan.

The crash occurred about a quarter-mile from the Oktibbeha County-Clay County line, and the exact circumstances of the crash remain under investigation, said Bryan.

Henderson, Smith and Sullivan were all pronounced dead at scene, said Clay County Coroner Alvin Carter Jr.

Bryan would not specify how Ivory and his minivan were identified as being involved in the hit-and-run crash, but did say that Ivory called E-911 operators while deputies were en route to his home to arrest him.

A trailer containing a lawnmower, other lawn equipment and some scrap metal was found east of the crash and was determined to have been attached to Ivory's minivan, Bryan said. Whether the trailer played a role in the crash also is under investigation, Bryan said.

"I think the trailer came loose from the vehicle in the crash, but that is still under investigation," Bryan said.

Autopsies have been ordered on all three bodies to determine the exact cause of death, through it appears the three died from the force of the crash impact, Bryan said.

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