



# City of Lodi Police Department

Mark Helms  
Chief of Police

## News Conference

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Good morning. Welcome, and thank you for attending this news conference. I am Mark Helms, Chief of Police for the City of Lodi. This morning I will provide information and take questions on the tragic collision that occurred in our community last Tuesday.

We will start with remarks from Lodi Mayor Alan Nakanishi. I will follow with a prepared written statement, and then we'll allow time for your questions.

- *Remarks from Mayor Alan Nakanishi.*

I want to begin by making it clear this horrific event was not an accident. In my view, this was the heinous act of one person that resulted in six senseless deaths, including an unborn child, and critical injuries to a 9-year-old boy who has been fighting for his life.

The Lodi Police Department is treating the incident as a homicide investigation, and we are working diligently to ensure the person responsible is brought to justice.

At 5:21 p.m. last Tuesday, October 22, 2013, we began receiving 911 calls reporting a reckless driver on Ham Lane and a multi-vehicle, multi-injury collision at the intersection of Ham Lane and Vine Street.

Lodi Police, Fire, and emergency medical personnel responded immediately. On-duty physicians and medical staff from nearby Lodi Memorial Hospital also responded, as well as several bystanders who came to the aid of those involved.

When first responders arrived moments later, they found five obviously involved vehicles at or near the intersection. We later determined a sixth vehicle was involved to a lesser degree.

Several victims of the collision were being treated on both sides of the roadway, including a triage area that was established on the adjacent campus of Lodi Middle School. Some victims were immediately declared deceased at the scene, while others

were transported to area hospitals. A few were treated and released at the scene and did not require hospitalization.

This event is an ongoing investigation. While much has already been done, as with any complex investigation, much more needs to be done. Measurements and evidence taken from the scene are being analyzed in order to determine the chain of events. Witness statements from civilians and emergency personnel are being reviewed. A number of forensic tests are being conducted to give us a fuller picture of what took place last Tuesday.

It is apparent that members of the media have read affidavits that are contained in search warrants in this case. The information contained in those warrants is based on "information and belief" and represent only the initial stages of our investigation.

Our preliminary investigation, however, has determined a 2002 GMC Yukon driven by Ryan Christopher Morales, 28, of Lodi, was travelling southbound on Ham Lane. When Mr. Morales entered the intersection at Vine Street, he collided with two vehicles in the intersection.

The second party was a 2001 Suzuki XL-7 SUV driven by Antonio Vasquez Romero, 59, and occupied by three children, ages 8, 13, and 17, all from Lodi. They were transported to St. Joseph's Medical Center in Stockton, where they were treated for minor injuries and released. We are fortunate their injuries were not serious.

The next vehicle struck in the intersection was a white 1998 Ford F-150 pickup driven by Lodi resident Luis Miranda Ochoa, 32. Traveling with him was his family: Vivianna Rodriguez Salgado, 31, who was 7-months pregnant; Irvin Miranda, 12; Eden Miranda, 9; Jose Luis Miranda Rodriguez, 6; and Stephanie Miranda, 5.

With the exception of Eden, all perished.

Vivianna was found seat-belted in the right front passenger seat. She was transported to Lodi Memorial Hospital, which is adjacent to the scene, where she and her unborn child were pronounced dead a short time later.

Irvin Miranda and Stephanie Miranda died at the scene.

Jose Luis Miranda Rodriguez was transported to UC Davis Medical center, where he passed away a short time later.

The sole survivor from that vehicle, Eden Miranda, was transported to a Sacramento hospital. I learned this morning that his condition has improved.

Two northbound vehicles, the fourth and fifth vehicles involved, were also struck. The sixth and final vehicle, which was parked several hundred feet to the south, was struck by a tire and wheel that had been severed from the Suzuki SUV.

The driver of the GMC Yukon, Mr. Morales, was found trapped in the driver's seat. He was extricated by Lodi Firefighters and transported to a hospital in Sacramento County. Mr. Morales suffered major injuries and is currently at the hospital, where he remains in critical condition. He has not been placed under arrest because of his medical condition, but he is being monitored by an on-duty Lodi Police Officer around the clock. It is our information that it is unlikely Mr. Morales will be released from the hospital anytime soon.

As said before, evidence is being analyzed and an investigation is ongoing to determine a variety of facts and circumstances. This will include the condition of the signal lights at the intersection as well as the speeds of the vehicles involved.

It does appear Mr. Morales had consumed alcohol prior to the collision, and we are waiting for test results that will give us a more accurate picture to what degree alcohol was a factor in this event.

There is no indication thus far that alcohol was a factor with any of the other parties.

The investigation is being headed by our Investigations Division and our Major Accident Investigation Team. These are essentially two parallel investigations, including a forensic reconstruction of the collision and an exhaustive criminal investigation. We are being assisted by the San Joaquin County District Attorney's Office and the California Highway Patrol. The CHP's Multidisciplinary Accident Investigation Team, also known as MAIT, is assisting with the reconstruction.

Once the initial investigation is completed, we will present our findings to the San Joaquin County District Attorney's Office, with whom we have already consulted. They will determine what, if any, charges will be filed and if any follow-up is needed.

Again, we are handling this case with the importance of a homicide investigation. As such, it is an investigation that may take months to complete.

Witness accounts are important. If there are witnesses out there who have not yet spoken to police, please contact Sergeant Shad Canestrino at 333-6861.

This event has taken its toll on the entire community. On behalf of the City of Lodi, our City Manager Konradt Bartlam, and all City staff, I want to thank the people of this great community for their support of the Miranda family and the others who have been affected by this horrible event.

Thank you to those who called 911 to report Ryan Morales to the police. Your calls were important.

Thank you to the on-duty physicians and medical staff of Lodi Memorial Hospital and Urgent Care who rushed to the scene, as well as the others who came to help the victims. You did the right thing, and your community is grateful.

Thanks to members of the DA's Office, CHP, Sheriff's Office, and the other allied agencies who are either helping or have offered their assistance. We value your partnerships, and we are grateful for your support.

Thank you to our first responders – the Police Officers, Firefighters, emergency medical personnel, Dispatchers, Partners, Chaplains, and Cadets – everyone who answered the phones, dispatched the emergency workers, responded to the scene, or are investigating this case. You performed flawlessly as you were trained to do, and we are proud of you.

Finally, I wish to express my deepest condolences to the entire Miranda family and everyone affected by their loss. Thoughts & prayers for a full recovery also go to young Eden Miranda.

This concludes my prepared remarks. Lieutenant Sierra Brucia will remain the Police Department's contact person for future media inquiries.