



PRESS RELEASE

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**UPPER FRUITLAND MAN PLEADS GUILTY TO FEDERAL INVOLUNTARY
MANSLAUGHTER AND ABUSIVE SEXUAL CONTACT CHARGES**

ALBUQUERQUE – Lamuel Thomas, 27, an enrolled member of the Navajo Nation who resides in Upper Fruitland, N.M., plead guilty to involuntary manslaughter and abusive sexual contact charges in federal court this morning. The guilty plea was entered under a plea agreement with the U.S. Attorney’s Office.

U.S. Attorney Kenneth J. Gonzales said that Thomas pleaded guilty to killing a 70-year-old Navajo woman on Nov. 9, 2010, while driving under the influence of alcohol on the Navajo Indian Reservation in San Juan County. He also admitted sexually molesting a 13-year-old child on March 2, 2011 in a location within the Navajo Indian Reservation.

In his plea agreement, Thomas admitted that, on the night of Nov. 9, 2010, he drove a truck along a rural highway on the Navajo Indian Reservation after drinking a large amount of alcohol and smoking marijuana. He crossed into the lane of incoming traffic and struck a car head on. The driver of the car, who was returning home from work, died as a result of injuries she suffered in the crash. At the time of the crash, Thomas’ blood alcohol concentration was more than twice the legal limit of .08.

Thomas also admitted that in the early morning hours of March 2, 2011, he inappropriately touched a 13 year old while he was an overnight guest of the victim’s parents.

Under the terms of the plea agreement, Thomas will serve eight years in prison for the involuntary manslaughter offense to run consecutive to a three-year term of imprisonment for the abusive sexual contact offense, for a total prison sentence of eleven years. The court will determine the period of supervised release that Thomas will serve after he completes his prison sentence. Thomas also will be required to register as a sex offender.

Thomas has been in federal custody since his arrest on Feb. 22, 2012, and remains detained pending his sentencing hearing, which has yet to be scheduled.

The case was investigated by the FBI and Shiprock Division of the Navajo Nation Department of Public Safety, and is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Mark T. Baker and Jacob A. Wishard.

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