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MAN CHARGED WITH INVOLUNTARY MANSLAUGHTER IN BASS LAKE DEATH

By Mark Evan Smith, Sierra Star

MADERA, CA. – A San Jose man was charged with misdemeanor involuntary manslaughter Tuesday for allegedly ramming a jet ski into an inflatable innertube at Bass Lake last month, which killed a 13-year-old boy and left a 16-year-old girl with serious injuries.

Phat Chau, 55, allegedly drove the waverunner (jet ski) on June 27 that killed David Flores, 13 of Fresno. Chau had two family members with him on the waverunner at the time of the accident.

Flores' aunt, Julissa Valenzuela, and his father were also on the innertube that was being pulled behind a pontoon boat. Valenzuela suffered a serious head injury, but has since been released from Community Regional Medical Center (CRMC) in Fresno. The father was not injured in the accident.

According to Madera County District Attorney David Linn, a criminal complaint was filed Tuesday morning in Madera County Superior Court.

A separate misdemeanor charge was filed related to Valenzuela's injury, saying Chau was in violation of a state Harbors & Navigation Code, in which a vessel was used in a reckless and negligent manner to endanger the life of another person.

Although the exact speed of the waverunner at the time of the accident is unknown, the sheriff's office said witnesses told investigators, it was traveling "very fast."

Chau was questioned by detectives at the scene the day of the accident, and although no arrest was made then, the Madera County Sheriff's Office continued an investigation.

A court date for Chau to appear in Superior Court is expected to be announced soon.

If convicted of the charges, Chau could face imprisonment in county jail, with future sentences to be determined by the court.