

Anaheim police officer facing 3 DUI charges resigns

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SANTA ANA -- An Anaheim police officer resigned Tuesday amid a department investigation and after being charged with driving under the influence of a cocktail of prescription drugs for the third time in less than a year.

The officer, who hasn't been to work since late 2008 but remained on paid administrative leave, has pleaded not guilty in one case of driving under the influence from an incident last March. The two latest charges were filed last week and Tuesday.

Kevin Noel Schlueter, 37, of Costa Mesa, is charged in three separate cases with one misdemeanor count of driving under the influence of drugs for each case.

Schlueter's three DUI arrests were first revealed earlier this month by the Register.

If convicted in all three cases, Schlueter faces up to two years and six months behind bars. Schlueter is scheduled to appear in court Friday.

Schlueter had been on leave since November 2008 for what department spokesman Sgt. Rick Martinez said was "a variety of reasons." Personnel rules prohibit him from giving specifics, Martinez said.

Schlueter's leave had been unpaid at first. But then in November 2009, months after Schlueter's first DUI arrest, Anaheim officials put him on paid administrative leave.

After Schlueter's arrests were publicized by the Register, Anaheim police issued a statement saying:

"The Anaheim Police Department is cooperating with the OC District Attorney's office in its prosecution of these cases and we have contacted the Department of Motor Vehicles regarding the officer's future driving privileges. We are also expediting our internal investigation into this matter in order to reach a decision concerning the officer's employment as soon as possible."

Schlueter resigned from the department Tuesday, Martinez said.

Schlueter's trouble behind the wheel appears to have started on March 18, 2009, when he was pulled over by the California Highway Patrol after nearly slamming into a CHP squad car. Several drivers had called 911 to report a possible DUI driver at the wheel of a silver Chevy

Tahoe on the 405 freeway that night, said CHP Officer Ray Payton.

Dispatchers sent a CHP officer ahead of the possible drunken driver weaving in the slow lane to wait for him to drive by, according to the report. The Tahoe drove by -- careening onto the right shoulder of the freeway and coming within a foot of hitting the waiting CHP squad car, the report said.

The officer watched as the Tahoe weaved from side to side, nearly colliding with a Range Rover. The CHP officer pulled the Tahoe over and after doing field sobriety tests on the driver, later identified as Schlueter, arrested him, according to the CHP report.

According to the Orange County District Attorney's Office, Schlueter is accused of displaying signs of drug intoxication including "shaking hands, red and watery eyes, slurred speech, and appeared lethargic." Prosecutors accuse Schlueter of being under the influence of prescription drugs that impaired his ability to drive including hydrocodone, hydromorphone, phenmetrazine, phendimetrazine, and carisoprodol.

Someone came to pick up Schlueter at the CHP office. On Sept. 1, 2009 prosecutors filed one misdemeanor count of driving under the influence. Schlueter pleaded not guilty.

On Jan. 21 prosecutors say Schlueter was driving on Oakridge Lane in Huntington Beach around 9:30 p.m. when he crashed his car through the backyard fence of a home. He sat in the driver's seat with the engine running until Huntington Beach police showed up, according to prosecutors.

Again Schlueter is accused of showing signs of being under the influence of drugs, including "slurred speech, a lack of coordination, and a lack of balance." According to prosecutors, he is accused of being under the influence of prescription drugs that impaired his ability to drive including hydrocodone, hydromorphone, meprobamate, and carisoprodol.

Schlueter was arrested and later released. Last week prosecutors charged Schlueter with one misdemeanor count of driving under the influence of drugs.

On March 2, Schlueter was arrested on suspicion of driving under the influence after crashing a 2010 Jeep Liberty into four parked cars on his own street in Costa Mesa in the middle of the afternoon.

According to prosecutors, Schlueter crashed into three parked cars, reversed his Jeep, and crashed into a fourth parked car while backing up.

The crashes ripped the right wheel off the axle of Schlueter's Liberty, according to Costa Mesa police Lt. Rob Sharpnack. The Liberty also suffered rear bumper damage, Sharpnack said.

An employee of an ambulance company saw the accidents and put the injured Schlueter in the back of the ambulance and waited for Costa Mesa police officers to arrive, according to prosecutors.

Again, according to prosecutors, Schlueter showed "objective" signs of drug intoxication including "having red and watery eyes and being incoherent and lethargic." He is accused of being under the influence of prescription drugs that impaired his ability to drive including

phentermine, carisoprodol, and oxycodone.

Schlueter was treated at the hospital for his injuries and released. On Tuesday, prosecutors charged him with one misdemeanor count of driving under the influence of drugs -- his third such charge in less than a year.