

SUV plunge off cliff may have been intentional, police say

Family was investigated for child neglect

Associated Press

MENDOCINO, Calif. — An SUV carrying a large family from Washington state accelerated straight off a scenic California cliff and authorities said the deadly wreck may have been intentional.

The wreck was discovered last week, days after child welfare authorities began investigating whether the children were being neglected.

Information pulled from the vehicle's software shows it was stopped at a flat, dirt pull-off area before it sped off the steep rocky face and plunged 100 feet, said Capt. Greg Baarts of the California Highway Patrol.

Speaking at an evening news conference Sunday night, Baarts said the electronic information combined with the lack of skid marks



The SUV of Jennifer and Sarah Hart was recovered off Pacific Coast Highway 1, near Westport, Calif.

or signs the driver braked led authorities to believe the crash was purposeful.

Five members of the Hart family were found dead. The search continued for three more children believed to have been in the vehicle when it went over a coastal overlook and landed on rocks in the Pacific Ocean below. The missing children may have been washed out to sea,

authorities say.

"This specific location is very difficult to search because the ocean currents and tides are strong, it's unpredictable, and the murkiness of the water makes it difficult to see," said Capt. Greg Van Patten, a spokesman for the Mendocino County Sheriff's Office.

Known as the Hart Tribe, the multiracial family of two married women — Sarah

and Jennifer Hart — and six adopted children often took spontaneous road trips to camp and hike and traveled to festivals and other events, offering hugs and promoting unity.

Authorities don't know exactly when the wreck took place. A passing motorist discovered the vehicle on March 26, three days after social service authorities in Washington state opened an investigation apparently prompted by a neighbor's complaint that the children were being deprived of food. Authorities believe at least one felony was committed but Van Patten declined to specify.

"To the best of my knowledge, there was not a suicide note found at the residence," said Baarts, who added that authorities have been interviewing friends and family members of the Harts.

"There have been red flags," he said, but did not elaborate.

Van Patten said he was not aware of any other evidence of abuse.

Well before the wreck, Sarah Hart pleaded guilty in 2011 to a domestic assault charge in Douglas County, Minnesota, telling authorities "she let her anger get out of control" while spanking her 6-year-old adopted daughter, court records show.

The two women, both 38, were found dead inside the SUV, while three of their children — Markis Hart, 19, Jeremiah Hart, 14, and Abigail Hart, 14 — were discovered outside the vehicle. Searchers were looking for Hannah Hart, 16; Sierra Hart, 12; and Devonte Hart, 15.

Devonte drew national attention after the black youngster was photographed in tears, hugging a white police officer during a 2014 protest in Portland over the deadly police shooting of a black man in Ferguson, Missouri. Devonte was holding a "Free Hugs" sign.

Two weeks ago, Bruce and Dana DeKalb, next-door neighbors of the Harts in Woodland, Washington,

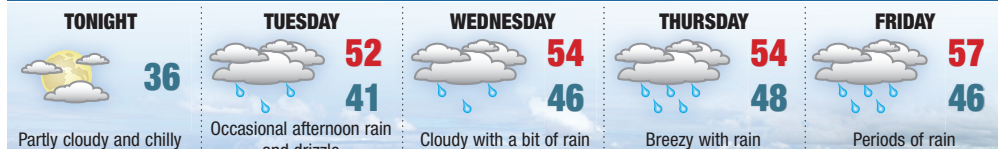
called state Child Protective Services because Devonte had been coming over to their house almost every day for a week, asking for food.

Dana DeKalb said Devonte told her his parents were "punishing them by withholding food." The boy asked her to leave food in a box by the fence for him, she said.

Social service authorities opened an investigation, and a state caseworker went to the house on March 23 but didn't find anyone home. The agency had no prior history with the family, said Norah West, a spokeswoman with the Washington Department of Social and Health Services.

On Thursday, authorities in Washington state combed through the family's home for information. The Clark County Sheriff's Office said deputies were looking for bills, receipts or anything else to shed light on why the family left and other circumstances related to the trip, KGW-TV reported.

FIVE-DAY FORECAST FOR ASTORIA



ALMANAC

Astoria through Sunday.

Temperatures
 High/low 47°/36°
 Normal high/low 55°/40°
 Record high 75° in 1944
 Record low 29° in 1953

Precipitation
 Sunday 0.48"
 Month to date 0.48"
 Normal month to date 0.21"
 Year to date 23.71"
 Normal year to date 25.05"

SUN AND MOON

Sunset tonight 7:45 p.m.
 Sunrise Tuesday 6:52 a.m.
 Moonrise today 10:24 p.m.
 Moonset today 8:24 a.m.

REGIONAL WEATHER

Shown is tomorrow's weather. Temperatures are tonight's lows and tomorrow's highs.

UNDER THE SKY

Tonight's Sky: Before dawn, Mars and Saturn will make a close approach, passing within 116 feet of each other.

Source: Jim Todd, OMSI

TOMORROW'S TIDES

Astoria / Port Docks	Time	Low
3:47 a.m.	9.0 ft.	10:25 a.m.
4:37 p.m.	7.8 ft.	10:22 p.m.

NATIONAL CITIES

City	Today	Tues.
Atlanta	81 60 pc	78 57 t
Boston	41 35 sn	47 40 r
Chicago	45 37 pc	44 27 r
Denver	71 24 pc	52 26 pc
Des Moines	42 35 r	39 18 r
Detroit	45 35 s	54 33 s
El Paso	84 60 s	81 52 s
Fairbanks	30 6 s	23 7 pc
Honolulu	80 73 sh	82 75 pc
Indianapolis	48 44 c	67 33 pc
Kansas City	38 36 c	47 18 pc
Las Vegas	85 57 s	77 56 s
Los Angeles	67 54 pc	70 55 s
Memphis	66 62 c	77 38 t
Miami	83 71 s	83 72 pc
Nashville	63 57 sh	79 39 pc
New Orleans	81 69 c	83 61 c
New York	46 38 sn	49 48 r
Oklahoma City	55 52 c	61 30 pc
Philadelphia	48 39 sn	54 53 r
St. Louis	41 41 r	64 28 t
Salt Lake City	59 30 sh	52 41 pc
San Francisco	65 50 pc	66 51 pc
Seattle	53 39 c	53 41 c
Washington, DC	55 45 pc	64 58 sh

TOMORROW'S NATIONAL WEATHER

Shown are noon positions of weather systems and precipitation. Temperature bands are highs for the day.

Local band ScheckPea holds party for CD release

The event is from 9 to 11 p.m. at The Voodoo Room at 1102 Marine Drive.

ScheckPea is a multi-instrumental band featuring a cultural array of roots, Gypsy jazz, African beats, Latin folk, blues and soul music.

"Sometimes a live recording can capture a moment in time more than a studio recording, despite its imperfections a certain feel and sound that comes from a relationship with an audience," Metzner writes. "Joe and I both agree this release captures some good times at The Voodoo Room."

Candidate forum for May election is Tuesday

A forum for candidates in the May primary election is scheduled for 7 p.m. Tuesday in the Astoria High School auditorium.

Candidates for the Clatsop County Board of Commissioners, state House District 32 and the 1st Congressional District have been invited to speak. Ron Brown, who is running unopposed for Clatsop County District Attorney, is also scheduled to appear.

The event is free and open to the public. Attendees will be able to submit questions in writing, which will be presented by moderator Trish Garner.

The forum is sponsored by the Astoria chapter of the American Association of University Women and The Daily Astorian.

ON THE RECORD

- #### DUII
- On Sunday, Placido Saucedo, 23, of Astoria, was arrested by the Clatsop County Sheriff's Office at the intersection of Svensen Market and George Hill roads for driving while under the influence of intoxicants.
 - On Saturday, Holly Stevens, 45, of Warrenton, was arrested by the Warrenton police near Main Avenue and Third Street on one count each of DUII and driving while suspended. Stevens had a blood alcohol content of 0.12 percent.
 - On Friday, Evan Patrick Norris, 28, of McMinnville, was arrested by the Oregon State Police for DUII. Norris was traveling eastbound
- #### Computer crime
- On Saturday, Barry Sharp, 48, of Olympia, Washington, was arrested by Seaside police near the Shilo Inn Oceanfront Seaside on one count each of computer crime, first-degree forgery and first-degree theft.
- #### Assault
- On Sunday, Danny Landauer, 59, of Seaside, was arrested by the Clatsop County Sheriff's Office on Dellmoor Loop in Warrenton for fourth-degree assault.

DEATHS

- March 31, 2018**
- CISZEK, Curtis R. Sr., 63, of Bend, died in Astoria. Hughes-Ransom Mortuaries & Crematory of Astoria/Seaside is in charge of the arrangements.
 - STURGES, Michael, 74, of Astoria, died in Portland. Hughes-Ransom Mortuaries & Crematory of Astoria/Seaside is in charge of the arrangements.
 - WILLIAMS, Katherine, 69, of Gearhart, died in Seaside. Hughes-Ransom Mortuaries & Crematory of Astoria/Seaside is in charge of the arrangements.

MEMORIAL

Thursday, April 5

GILL, Jean Francis — Rosary at 10:30 a.m., Mass at 11 a.m., All Saint's Catholic Church, 3847 N.E. Glisan St. in Portland.

PUBLIC MEETINGS

- MONDAY**
- Astoria City Council, 7 p.m., City Hall, 1095 Duane St.
 - Commission, 10:30 a.m., 1225 Avenue A., Seaside.
 - Seaside Library Board, 4:30 p.m., 1131 Broadway, Seaside.
- TUESDAY**
- Miles Crossing Sanitary Sewer District Board, 6 p.m., 34583 Seaside Community Center.
 - U.S. Highway 101 Business. Seaside Planning Commission, 7 p.m., City Hall, 989 Broadway.
 - Cannon Beach City Council, 7 p.m., City Hall, 163 E. Gower St.

LOTTERIES

- OREGON**
- Sunday's Pick 4: 1 p.m.: 0-0-1-4; 4 p.m.: 3-9-0-3; 7 p.m.: 6-8-6-8; 10 p.m.: 9-2-5-4
 - Sunday's Lucky Lines: 01-06-12-15-20-22-26-29
 - Estimated jackpot: \$13,000
 - Saturday's Pick 4: 1 p.m.: 0-2-6-5; 4 p.m.: 5-4-4-4; 7 p.m.: 5-4-4-3; 10 p.m.: 6-9-8-5
 - Saturday's Lucky Lines: 04-05-11-16-20-23-27-29
 - Estimated jackpot: \$11,000
 - Saturday's Megabucks: 8-17-19-25-42-43
- Estimated jackpot: \$2.8 million
- Saturday's Powerball:** 8-24-52-55-61, Powerball: 21
- Estimated jackpot: \$60 million
- Friday's Pick 4:** 1 p.m.: 6395; 4 p.m.: 9379; 7 p.m.: 9082; 10 p.m.: 8762
- Friday's Lucky Lines:** 01-05-12-13-18-23-28-32
- Estimated jackpot: \$10,000
- Friday's Mega Millions:** 11-28-31-46-59, Mega Ball: 1
- Estimated jackpot: \$40 million
- WASHINGTON**
- Sunday's Daily Game: 3-1-4
 - Sunday's Keno: 03-16-17-22-24-25-33-41-43-46-48-51-54-58-63-70-72-73-76-78
 - Sunday's Match 4: 07-12-18-21
 - Saturday's Daily Game: 8-7-6
 - Saturday's Hit 5: 01-19-20-22-34
 - Estimated jackpot: \$160,000
 - Saturday's Keno: 10-11-14-15-20-22-26-29-30-33-34-42-44-45-50-59-62-68-72-80
 - Saturday's Lotto: 06-24-26-38-44-45
 - Estimated jackpot: \$3.6 million
 - Saturday's Match 4: 04-09-13-16
 - Friday's Daily Game: 2-2-7
 - Friday's Keno: 02-05-06-08-09-10-11-15-21-23-26-27-28-39-50-65-66-74-75-80
 - Friday's Match 4: 07-09-20-21

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-Lisa, Astoria

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