

Parolee pleads “not guilty” to hit-and-run death

MURRIETA, Calif. — A 21-year-old parolee charged in the hit-and-run death of a Hemet woman crossing a street pleaded not guilty to vehicular manslaughter today.

Jonathon Ryan Patton of Banning entered his plea and was assigned a deputy public defender. A private attorney retained earlier was relieved.

Patton is accused in the death of Barbara Rey, who was struck March 3 on Florida Avenue near Gilbert Street in Hemet just before 7 p.m. that Tuesday, Hemet police said.

The driver of the Chevrolet Blazer fled, and some motorists who tried to follow the SUV were unable to keep track of it, Hemet police Lt. Jeffrey Pinney said.

But based on information from witnesses, police identified Patton as the suspect and used data from his GPS ankle bracelet to confirm he was at the scene, the lieutenant said.

Riverside County Superior Court Judge Judith Clark ordered Patton back to court April 15 for a felony settlement conference. A preliminary hearing is tentatively set for April 20.

Records show Patton has a 2006 felony “strike” for discharging a firearm. Under the state’s “three strikes” law, a second strike could double his sentence, and a third could net him 25 years to life in prison.

Patton also faces allegations of fleeing the scene of a crime and causing an accident resulting in death.

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