

Ramsey James, 24, of Window Rock died Thursday evening at the University of New Mexico Hospital in Albuquerque from injuries sustained during an alleged hit and run Feb. 6. Cameron Smith, 18, of Gallup reportedly hit Smith with his black Ford pickup truck and fled the scene.

While on patrol, at about 1 am, Gallup Police Department Officer Timothy Hughte found the critically injured James in the middle of the road, across from El Charrito Restaurant, 2003 W. Highway 66.

Hughte said James had sustained serious head trauma and a leg injury.

While on scene, police received a message that one of Smith's parents had called and said that he was involved in the accident and had been drinking, according to reports. Per Hughte's request, Smith was brought back to the scene for questioning. Smith told police that he saw someone "go up and over his vehicle," and got "scared" so he kept on driving. He did admit to having one drink and struggled while taking the field sobriety tests, administered by Hughte.

While Smith blew a .13 and .14 during the alcohol breath tests (the legal limit is .08), he has yet to be charged with a DWI. He also voluntarily submitted a blood test to check for any and all substances that my have impaired his judgment that evening, which results are pending. So far, he is facing charges for great bodily injury by vehicle and leaving the scene of an accident. GPD Capt. Rick White said with the passing of James, police will notify District Attorney Karl Gillson's office of the changes in the case, and they could amend the original charges. This could likely include the new charge of vehicular homicide, White added.

According to a news release from the Office of the President and Vice President, James served as a volunteer firefighter for two years with the Navajo Nation at Station 10 in Window Rock and Station 12 in Fort Defiance. He completed the Navajo Nation Fire Academy in 2013 and graduated with Fire Class #1306.

“On behalf of the 23rd Navajo Nation Council, we mourn the loss of Firefighter James and we re cognize his service to the Navajo Nation for his bravery and honor. He took it upon himself to be a protector of our Navajo people, and we will remember his honorable service to our Nation,” said Speaker LoRenzo Bates (Nenahnezad, Newcomb, San Juan, Tiis Tsoh Sikaad, Tse’Daa’Kaan, Upper Fruitland).

Firefighter James is originally from Fort Defiance, Arizona and is a graduate of Window Rock High School.

Council Delegate Edmund Yazzie (Churchrock, Iyanbito, Mariano Lake, Pinedale, Smith Lake, Thoreau), chair of the Law and Order Committee, said he sends his deepest condolences and prayers to Firefighter James's family on behalf of the LOC.

“This is absolutely heartbreaking news for the Navajo Nation. Losing a vital public safety servant is devastating and a hard-hit to the Nation,” said Delegate Yazzie. “We wish the family healing and comfort during this difficult time, and we are sending prayers to them.”

James's family has set up a memorial fund in his honor to pay for funeral expenses and have reached out to the public for their assistance on their “Go Fund Me” page. You may visit: https://www.gofundme.com/q9sgjkms
to donate and leave a condolence message.