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N.J. State Police detective charged with drunken driving after crash

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A New Jersey State Police detective has been charged with drunken driving after a car crash, The Star-Ledger has learned.

By [Christopher Baxter | NJ Advance Media for NJ.com](#)

TRENTON — A State Police detective has been charged with drunken driving after he drove his vehicle off a road in Chatham Borough, crashed through a concrete wall and came to rest on top of a large rock, The Star-Ledger has learned.

Two sources familiar with the incident said acting Detective Sgt. 1st Class Joseph P. Brennan had been off-duty and played the bagpipes at a private birthday party for Newark Police Director Samuel DeMaio earlier that night.

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The sources, who requested anonymity because they were not authorized to discuss the incident, did not say where the party had been held, who else attended or if Brennan — a member of the Pipes and Drums of the Blue and Gold, a nonprofit, trooper-led bagpipe band — had been drinking.

Superintendent Col. Rick Fuentes also plays with the band, but a spokesman for the State Police, Lt. Stephen Jones, said Fuentes did not attend the party.

DeMaio declined comment.

Brennan, 43, of Rutherford, was found unresponsive behind the wheel of his own sport utility vehicle at 3:17 a.m. on Dec. 28 by borough police, according to reports obtained through the Open Public Records Act.

Police said once they got Brennan's attention, his speech was slurred, his breath smelled of alcohol and his lips were stained purple "as if he was consuming red wine." He seemed confused about what was happening and was told he had been in an accident, the report said.

When asked if he had been drinking, police said, "he mumbled what sounded like a no."

Brennan, who is assigned to State Police's Analysis Unit at the Regional Operations Intelligence Center in West Trenton, was charged with driving while intoxicated, reckless driving and refusal to submit to a breath test, police said. He was released pending an appearance in municipal court.



State Police.jpg

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No one was injured in the accident, which occurred at Watchung Avenue and River Road.

Jones said Brennan — who joined the force in 1998 and earned \$105,588 in 2011, according to state records — was suspended without pay the day of the arrest pending the outcome of the charges and an internal investigation.

Brennan did not return a call for comment.

Shortly after finding Brennan, Detective Joseph Crecca of Chatham Borough asked him to get out of his vehicle, according to the police report, but he repeatedly reached for his right hip under his suit jacket. Crecca said he felt "unsafe," and handcuffed Brennan's left hand before guiding him from the vehicle.

Crecca found Brennan's gun on his right hip and confiscated it after another officer arrived, the report said. Officers also seized Brennan's State Police badge from his right pocket. He was booked at borough police headquarters, police said, where he refused a breath test.

Brennan's weapon was later released to a member of the State Police's internal affairs unit.

The crash was the latest in a string of alcohol-related incidents involving the State Police. In 2011, a trooper was charged with operating a vehicle under the influence and having an open container of alcohol after running a red light in Pequannock Township and hitting another car.

In April, a trooper was arrested on charges of drunken driving and other offenses by members of the Missouri State Highway Patrol. And in July, another trooper was charged after allegedly hitting two parked cars in Lake Como, crashing his cruiser into a backyard creek and fleeing.

Star-Ledger staff writer James Queally contributed to this report.

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