

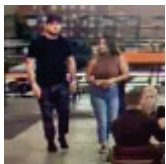
New Jersey State Police trooper charged with drunk driving after crashing car into creek



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A New Jersey State Police trooper has been charged with drunken driving and other offenses after striking two parked cars, crashing his police vehicle into a backyard creek and then fleeing the scene, according to reports.

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Trooper Kevin Byrne, 33, of Spring Lake Heights, N.J., was off-duty at about 2:45 a.m. on July 25 when he allegedly hit the unoccupied cars, which were parked in an area frequented by tourists of the Jersey Shore.

At the same time, the Lake Como Police Department received a report of a hit-and-run accident, [the Star-Ledger reported](#). The report said police found an unmarked state police vehicle in a nearby creek.

No one was injured in the wreck.

The department notified the New Jersey State Police, which took over the investigation.

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A spokesman for the state police, Acting Sgt. 1st Class Brian Police, told the Star-Ledger that Byrne was arrested at about 3 a.m. at his home, more than two miles away from where he abandoned his car.

The man who reported the accident to Lake Como police, Nicholas Duva, told the Star-Ledger he was awakened that night by car alarms. He said he went outside and saw his two cars had been struck. One was totaled and the other severely damaged, he said.

“We’ve been renting here a couple of years,” Duva said. “This wasn’t exactly in the vacation plans, but these things happen. One was my son’s car and I’m really happy no one was hurt.”

Byrne was charged with driving under the influence of alcohol, careless driving likely to endanger person or property, and leaving the scene of an accident, according to Lake Como municipal court records. He is scheduled to appear in court Wednesday.

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Under the New Jersey State Police’s policy governing alcohol use, any accident involving a trooper under the influence of alcohol requires a response from the field operations commander. The commander is responsible for ensuring all proper law-enforcement procedures are followed.

Byrne is assigned to the Central T.E.A.M.S. unit, a highly specialized group of emergency responders. He made \$94,232 last year in regular salary, not including overtime and other pay, according to state payroll records.

The state police’s alcohol policy states that even off-duty troopers are prohibited from drinking, even while on vacation, to the extent that it might affect their work because they could be called to duty at any time - particularly if they are a member of an emergency-response team.

Police said Byrne, a 10-year veteran, was suspended without pay the same day as the incident, pending the outcome of the criminal charges and an internal investigation by the state police.

Troopers found in violation of the alcohol policy can be dismissed from the force, with the final decision resting with Superintendent Col. Rick Fuentes.

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