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**SANDWICH MAN SENTENCED TO JAIL FOR HIT AND RUN THAT LEFT
FIREFIGHTER SERIOUSLY INJURED**

BROCKTON – A Sandwich man has pleaded guilty and been sent to jail on charges that he struck and seriously injured a firefighter in Wareham and then fled the scene, Plymouth County District Attorney Timothy J. Cruz has announced.

Paul J. Durgin, 30, of Sandwich, pleaded guilty today in Plymouth Superior Court. Judge Cornelius Moriarty sentenced Durgin to serve 3-3 ½ years in state prison on one count of Assault and Battery with a Dangerous Weapon. Durgin was additionally sentenced to 2 ½ years in the house of correction on one count of Leaving the Scene of an Accident with Personal Injury. This sentence is to be served concurrently with the State Prison sentence. Following his State Prison sentence, Durgin is to serve two years of probation on and after for one count of Negligent Operation of a Motor Vehicle.

On March 2, 2018, the town of Wareham was impacted by a major storm, and members of the Wareham Police Department, and Wareham and Onset Fire Departments were responding to reports of downed trees, live electrical wires and flooding conditions.

At approximately 6:30 pm, members of the Onset Fire Department, including the victim in this case, who is an Onset firefighter, were dispatched to the area of Cranberry Highway at Onset Avenue, where severe winds were blowing pieces of sheet metal into the roadway. Onset Fire personnel assisted Wareham Police in closing the roadway. All responding personnel, including the victim, were wearing reflective vests, and there were cones and caution tape in the area and several emergency vehicles present with their lights flashing.

At approximately 7:00 pm, the male victim was standing within the closed section of the roadway when an unidentified vehicle drove through the traffic cones and caution tape and struck the Onset firefighter. The operator of the vehicle continued on through the closed section of roadway, heading south to Bourne, never attempting to stop. Emergency personnel immediately tended to the victim on scene. Investigators estimated

that the Onset firefighter was thrown approximately 40 feet when he was struck, and suffered serious, life-threatening injuries. He was transported to Rhode Island Hospital.

Witnesses to the crash who reported that they saw a light gray or silver sedan flee the scene. The operator later was identified as Durgin, and on the following day, Wareham Police Department received information that he was staying at a motel in Centerville. Police responded and located a silver sedan with windshield and vehicle damage consistent with a collision, but Durgin was not located at the motel. As a result, Wareham Police sought and obtained an arrest warrant for Durgin, and he was arrested several days later.

“This heroic first responder was doing his job protecting the public safety and setting up a roadblock during a snowstorm when his life was forever changed,” DA Cruz said. “In his impact statement to the judge, the victim said, ‘I must mourn the loss of the many things that I was planning but can no longer do. I will likely have to deal with and examine the impact that this event had on me for the rest of my life.’ ”

DA Cruz added, “I am hopeful that with today’s sentencing this hero can continue along in his healing process in body and mind.”

The case was prosecuted by Assistant District Attorney Russell Eonas and was investigated by the Wareham Police Department.

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