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Felon sentenced to 10 years for crash that injured his children

Father left his injured children in van and fled. One is paralyzed for life.

By Kevin Duchscherer (<http://www.startribune.com/kevin-duchschere/10644786/>) Star Tribune |

JANUARY 26, 2015 — 9:37PM

A Brooklyn Park man was sentenced Monday to 10 years in prison for crashing his van on a St. Paul street last summer and fleeing, leaving his young son in the crumpled vehicle with a broken leg and his teenage daughter paralyzed.

Earl L. Ward, 46, received the maximum allowable sentence from Ramsey County District Judge Leonardo Castro. Ward pleaded guilty in November to two counts of criminal vehicular operation causing great bodily harm and leaving the scene of the accident.

“We are pleased that the court imposed the statutory maximum in this case and hope that the victims and their family gain some peace of mind in light of this tragic situation,” Ramsey County Attorney John Choi said in a prepared statement.

Ward’s criminal history includes convictions for assault, drug offenses, promotion of prostitution and fleeing police — 11 felony convictions in all, which the judge used as aggravating factors in deciding the sentence.

Ward’s son, now 9, has recovered but his 14-year-old daughter is paralyzed for life, owing to spinal fractures suffered in the crash.

According to the complaint, in the hours before the July 1 crash Ward had been drinking while at a drive-in movie with his girlfriend. Later, the couple quarreled at a St. Paul residence and he drove off without her.

A short time later, about 3:22 a.m., he crashed the van into a deep pavement cutout marked with orange cones, signs and tape, not far from Beaver Lake in the city’s northeast corner.

Hearing cries, the girlfriend — also the mother of the children — ran to the van and found the children on their backs in obvious pain.

Ward, who had been standing outside the vehicle, was gone by the time she returned from calling police. Officers found the girl apparently unable to move anything besides her head, and saw bone protruding from the boy’s leg. Paramedics took the children to Regions Hospital.

On the evening of July 1, police found Ward sleeping in a car outside his sister’s home in

(http://stmedia.stimg.co/ows_f142232830643572.jpg?w=2000)
Earl L. Ward

St. Paul, smelling of alcohol. They arrested him on outstanding felony warrants.

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