



Bruins 3, Penguins 4, Final

Trooper had record of driving violations before alleged off-duty OUI that seriously injured 3

By [Matt Rocheleau](#) Globe Staff, September 5, 2019, 11:38 a.m.



State Trooper Jason M. Welch appears for his arraignment at Chicopee District Court on Thursday. NIC ANTAYA FOR THE BOSTON GLOBE

A Massachusetts State Police trooper racked up a number of driving violations, crashes, and citizens' complaints in previous years before he allegedly got drunk while off duty in July and slammed his pickup truck into an SUV, seriously

injuring three people, including another off-duty trooper.

Jason M. Welch's past infractions included a 2007 incident in which he was stopped by a State Police trooper and cited for having an open container of alcohol in his vehicle while also speeding — driving 110 miles per hour in a 55 miles per hour zone — in Shirley, according to his driving record and citations.

Welch was cited for speeding in three other cases between 2003 and 2007, two of which were by State Police, the records show. In two more instances during those years, he was cited for failing to stop or yield and not wearing a seat belt.

Ayer police records show Welch was cited again for speeding in 2009, but that violation does not appear on his state driving record.

Those infractions, all civil offenses, occurred when Welch was in his late teens and early 20s, before he entered the State Police Academy in late 2013.

But shortly after his arrival to the state's largest law enforcement agency, Welch faced two additional complaints lodged by private citizens within a three-month span in 2015 for tailgating other vehicles in his department-issued cruiser, according to a log of internal affairs cases.

Welch was also involved in two other crashes in his hometown in recent years, though neither resulted in any reported injuries.

In 2015, his Subaru Legacy hit a slushy area on the road in Ayer causing it to slide onto the other side of the road, where it collided head-on with a Dodge Durango driven by a Townsend woman, Ayer police records show. Both vehicles

needed to be towed away.

In 2006, Welch failed to observe a sign along Mill Street and drove a 10-foot, 6-inch tall box truck into a bridge with a 9-foot, 6-inch clearance causing heavy damage to the vehicle, Ayer police records show.

State Police spokesman David Procopio said in an e-mail that the department conducted a background investigation on Welch in 2013, before he was admitted to the academy.

“Massachusetts State Police background investigators examine numerous components of candidates’ personal and professional histories, including their driving records,” Procopio said. “In cases where candidates incurred driving violations earlier in their lives, one mitigating factor that is considered is the nature of the infractions, the age of the candidate at the time of the infractions, and the length of time since the last violation.”

Procopio said the two tailgating complaints against Welch were resolved before rising to the level of a full internal investigation. “This is not uncommon for complaints of a relative minor alleged violation and when the complainant is amenable,” he said.

Welch’s most recent [crash happened on July 21](#). The 35-year-old was arraigned Sept. 5 in Chicopee District Court on charges of operating under the influence of liquor causing serious bodily injury, reckless operation of a motor vehicle, operating under the influence of liquor, and failure to take care in stopping. A not-guilty plea was entered on his behalf, and he was released on his own recognizance.

Welch’s attorney, Steven M. Vaillancourt, in an e-mail declined to comment on the specifics of the case.

“Mr. Welch has always acted responsibly and has conducted himself as a model citizen,” Vaillancourt wrote. “At this time his thoughts and sympathy are with those who may have been affected by this accident. Out of respect for the process, we will reserve further comment at this time.”

Welch had a blood alcohol level more than twice the legal limit and was driving 58 miles per hour in a 40 mile per-hour zone when his Ford F150 crashed into the back of a Ford Expedition stopped at a red light on Interstate 291 where the highway officially ends in Chicopee. The crash happened shortly before 2:45 a.m., according to a report by a State Police lieutenant who investigated the crash.

When first responders arrived, the entire scene reeked of alcohol and a mix of open and sealed beer bottles were found both inside and around Welch’s vehicle, the report said.

A 34-year-old passenger was thrown from the front passenger seat of the Expedition to the rear of the vehicle and broke two vertebrae in his spine, according to the report, while the 33-year-old driver suffered a hematoma, or a mass of usually clotted blood within body tissue, on her left elbow and upper arm.

Meanwhile, Welch suffered a pair of fractured ribs, and Welch’s passenger, fellow off-duty trooper Timothy Stone, 36, suffered a dislocated hip and a laceration to his left leg, the report said.

A Chicopee police officer, who was the first officer to arrive on the scene, reported that the scene smelled of beer, both Welch and Stone appeared to be drunk, and Welch quickly asked for help.

“You got to help us both out. We’re both Troopers,” Welch told the Chicopee officer, according to the report, to which the officer said he replied “You got to be [expletive] kidding me!” and immediately asked for a supervisor to respond.

A few hours after the crash, Stone, lying in a hospital bed in Springfield, told the investigating lieutenant that he had been drinking beer before the crash but didn't remember how much or what kind and didn't know where the beer that was found at the scene came from, the report said.

When asked if Welch had been drinking, Stone said, according to the report, "No. I don't remember. He was driving, so he didn't have anything to drink."

Stone said he was asleep at the time of the crash and had "no clue" where they were going at the time and then asked to speak to a union representative, the report said.

When the investigating lieutenant interviewed Welch in the hospital less than an hour later, Welch was "emotional" as the lieutenant spoke, "his eyes tearing up," the report said.

"When I asked him what happened, he requested to speak to a lawyer," the investigating lieutenant wrote, adding that Welch smelled of alcohol, his eyes were bloodshot and glassy, and his speech was slurred. "In my opinion Jason Welch was intoxicated."

Later, the lieutenant returned to Welch's hospital room and handed him a criminal summons. While the lieutenant explained the summons, Welch "spontaneously stated, 'I'm sorry,' " according to the report.

About two weeks after the crash, State Police [announced](#), without naming Welch, that the department had filed a criminal complaint against him.

The agency placed Welch on restricted duty after the crash and launched an internal investigation. In light of Welch's criminal arraignment, his duty status will be reassessed in the near future, Procopio said.

His next court date is scheduled for Nov. 13.

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