

POLICE SAY OFFICERS ENDED CHASE BEFORE FATAL CRASH

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Three people killed during a police car chase in northwest Detroit were identified Saturday, and Detroit police said officers followed long-standing procedure and ended the chase as it neared a residential neighborhood.

Killed in Friday's crash at Puritan and Ohio avenues were **Darnell Blissett**, 16; Cordelia Griffith, 27, and her niece, Monique Griffith, 15, all of Detroit. A fourth person, Ivy Donaldson, 17, remained in critical condition Saturday at Mt. Carmel Mercy Hospital.

Police said the four victims were in a stolen Ford Mustang convertible that officers attempted to pull over for reckless driving at 7:50 p.m. at Hamilton and Collingwood avenues near the Lodge Freeway.

With police chasing it, the car fled north on the Lodge and exited near Puritan Avenue before ramming into a shop and flipping over, throwing three of the four occupants onto the roadway. Two victims were dead on arrival at Mt. Carmel, and the third was dead on arrival at Sinai Hospital.

Police said officers had called off the chase for safety reasons as the car exited the Lodge. But one witness said police were still chasing the car when it crashed.

The three deaths bring to at least 49 the number of people in the Detroit area who have been killed during or after police chases since 1982; more than 80 others have been injured.

A 26-year-old Detroit woman, Wanda Martin, was killed Aug. 17 when a car fleeing Hamtramck police rammed her vehicle at Nevada and Riopelle on Detroit's east side. Police said they had called off that chase before the crash.

In March, a Detroit police officer, Vicki Hubbard, was killed when a Toyota being chased by other police officers broadsided her car on East Vernor. Her partner, Officer Gary Slappey, was seriously injured.

Detroit City Councilman David Eberhard called Hubbard's death "senseless and silly" and joined other political leaders in calling on the police to avoid high-speed car chases when minor property crimes are suspected.

Eberhard said Saturday that the police appeared to have shown restraint in Friday's crash.

"I think there are new procedures," he said. "I think they are calling off the chases when they get into residential areas."

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