Winter Weather Driving Fatality File



Driver stuck in snow burns to death after repeatedly revving SUV’s engine

A New Jersey man was killed in a fire after repeatedly revving his SUV’s engine while trying to get out of a snowbank, authorities said.

Shortly after 9 a.m. Wednesday, police in Little Ferry said officers responded to a report of a car getting stuck in a pile of snow after going down an embankment near Losen Slote Creek Park, about 10 miles northwest of New York City.

Little Ferry police Capt. Ronald Klein told NBC News on Thursday that two officers found a 62-year-old driver repeatedly revving up the engine and rocking his Mazda SUV back and forth to dislodge the vehicle from the snow.

He said officers told the man to stop accelerating to no avail before telling him they were returning to their vehicle to call for a tow truck. While walking back to their vehicle, the officers heard a popping sound and saw the SUV catch fire.

The officers tried to get into the vehicle, but Klein said the doors were locked. After several attempts to break into the SUV, one officer eventually broke the rear passenger window.

At that point, Klein said the vehicle was engulfed in flames and smoke, forcing officers to retreat to a safe distance from the SUV.

The driver’s name has not been released, but his family has been notified, according to police.

The Little Ferry Police Department and the Bergen County’s Prosecutor’s Office will oversee the investigation.

The fiery crash was one of multiple deadly incidents during a major winter storm that suspended flights, cut electricity, and closed schools and Covid-19 vaccination sites across the Northeast.