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Police motorcycle crash detailed

Plant City police say the officer whose bike slid and hurt three others was going 37 mph.

BY REBECCA CATALANELLO
Times Staff Writer

TAMPA — Plant City police Officer Chad Rader was traveling 37 mph on a motorcycle before he crashed into metal bleachers last month, injuring himself and three others, including the police chief.

That's according to a crash report released Monday in compliance with a public records request by the *St. Petersburg Times*.

Seventeen people, most from the Plant City Chamber of Commerce's leadership class, were seated in the bleachers at the Plant City police headquarters on Nov. 18 and watched Rader give a motorcycle demonstration when he lost control of the 2005 Harley-Davidson.

According to the crash report, another officer clocked Rader at 37 mph as he rode toward the bleachers. Rader applied his brakes, the report says, but the front wheel locked up, and the officer began to skid, leaving a 41-foot skid mark.

That's when Rader tried to steer the motorcycle to the right, at which point it tipped over in the opposite direction, the report says. Rader was thrown from the motorcycle, and the bike slid 36.3-feet on its left side before crashing into the bleachers.

Lynn Connor, one of the Lead-

ership Plant City members who was injured, said she couldn't tell how fast the motorcycle was going before it hit her, slamming into her right leg.

"I just remember the motorcycle coming at me at what seemed to be a high rate of speed," she said today from a room at Habana Health Care Center. She was moved to the center from South Florida Baptist Hospital on Wednesday night for daily physical therapy.

Helen Stratigakos, an attorney for Connor, said she has notified Plant City police that she is investigating claims from the accident.

Stratigakos' only comment about the crash report was that she had hired her own investigators to determine the speed the motorcycle was traveling and to inspect the motorcycle itself.

Tom Scarritt, an attorney handling the case for Plant City police, said he is also in the process of hiring independent experts to study the crash and determine its cause.

Rader, who has been with Plant City for eight years, has not been disciplined in the incident, Scarritt said.

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