

Man who nearly caused head-on collision charged with inhaling vapors

Written by Marty Randall

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A man who allegedly nearly caused a head-on collision on State Road 56 West in Scottsburg has now been charged with inhaling a toxic vapor while driving.

Benjamin L. Edwards, 37, Bloomfield, has three charges pending in Scott Superior Court, a Level A misdemeanor operating a motor vehicle while intoxicated and two Class B misdemeanors, inhaling a toxic vapor and criminal recklessness.

9-1-1 calls came into the Scott County Dispatch Center at 9:45 p.m. on October 11 from motorists who said that Edwards' eastbound vehicle veered into the westbound lanes, nearly striking one vehicle head-on. Another motorist who had been driving behind the westbound SUV corroborated the cross-over story.

When Patrolman James Vires and other officers arrived at the scene, Edwards' vehicle was in a ditch on the north side of the road by the Long John Silver's restaurant. Edwards was already out of the car and told Ptl. Vires that he was not injured and that he was on several medications and may have had a medical reaction.

As the investigation went on, Edwards produced several prescription bottles bearing his name. However, the officer also located Clonazepan tablets in Edwards' possession, and Patrolman Troy Ford said he saw a can of the cleaning product Dust Off sticking out from under the passenger seat of the vehicle. Indiana State Trooper Shannon Burton, who had stopped to help, also located a can of the product. Ptl. Ford then discovered Edwards' prescription bottle for the Clonazepan.

Edwards allegedly later made the statement that he had taken several types of medication and was inhaling Dust Off as he was driving. He said he passed out after inhaling the product, the probable cause affidavit revealed. An initial hearing was conducted in Superior Court on October 14. Judge Marsha Owens Houser entered a preliminary plea of not guilty for Edwards to the charges, and the man's driving privileges in Indiana were immediately suspended.

His trial date is December 1. Bond was fixed at \$15,000 by corporate surety bond or \$1,500 by cash.