

Insight into a deadly crash

Re "In LAPD crash, blame is elusive," Column One, Jan. 17

Contrary to The Times' headline, assigning blame in the crash of a Los Angeles Police Department vehicle that killed Devin Petelski doesn't seem elusive.

Two witnesses estimated the police were speeding down Venice Boulevard at 60 to 80 miles per hour, and the police car's "black box" showed its top speed was 78 mph three seconds before the crash. The officer's claim that he was only going 40 mph to 45 mph while he was diverting from his assigned task to go back up

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other officers dealing with a "hot" situation flies in the face of reason.

And why didn't the on-scene officer put the witnesses' speed estimates into his report? Why couldn't LAPD investigators download the black box but an outside expert could? Why did an officer who performed CPR on the victim claim he smelled alcohol when hospital tests showed there was none? Why has the LAPD's chain of command fully backed a version of events that blames the victim?

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Any time a California police agency is involved in a serious injury or fatal traffic accident, it should refrain from conducting an in-house investigation.

The California Highway Patrol's Multidisciplinary Accident Investigation Team can conduct a professional investigation to bolster public confidence in the transparency and fairness of the results. The CHP's team is as good as it gets in serious accident investigation, and it responds immediately to requests for help from other police agencies.

Public confidence demands fair and impartial investigations in these matters.

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