

Father calls for action in wake of son's death

Written by Carol Pomeday
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Man asks town to require lights on manure spreaders to prevent accidents like the one that killed teenager

The father of a teenager who was killed when he drove into the back of a manure spreader in the fog late Oct. 28 urged Town of Belgium officials Monday to adopt an ordinance requiring lights on manure spreaders and other farm implements at night.

Steven Casarez Sr. of Adell said that for \$200 he bought a portable light bar with flashers that plugs into a cigarette lighter and is easily mounted on a roof.

Such a light, he said, may have saved the life of his son.

"I was there shortly after the accident, and it didn't look good to me — not the lights on the tractor or the sign on the manure spreader," Casarez said.

"I'm looking at not letting this happen again to somebody else's son or loved one. If something like this happened again, I would feel so bad that I didn't do enough to stop it.

"If anybody is going to be spreading at night, there has to be more lights on the vehicles on roads."

Local legislators told him they are trying to strengthen the state law, Casarez said, but that could take a long time.

The town can take quicker action, he said.

Casarez's son Steven Jr., 19, was killed about 11 p.m. in the Town of Fredonia when his 1995 Chevrolet pickup truck crashed into a manure spreader that was stopped in the westbound lane of Jay Road. The tractor pulling the spreader was preparing to turn left into a farm field to spread potato mash from Lakeside Foods in Belgium.

Ozaukee County District Attorney Adam Gerol is expected to decide this week what, if any, charges should be brought against the driver, Daniel Golownia, 33, of Belgium. Gerol said he is waiting for a reconstruction accident report and wanted to know the visibility distance that night.

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The sheriff's department has recommended Golownia be charged with one felony count of causing grave bodily harm by reckless driving and a misdemeanor count of operating a commercial vehicle without a commercial license.

State law requires only a reflective slow-moving-vehicle sign on farm implements, but rear lights visible above the implement are required on tractors pulling them.

The sheriff's department contends Lakeside Foods is a commercial operation and must follow rules for commercial vehicles, not the more lenient laws for farmers.

Last month, Town Supr. Bill Janeshek said Lakeside Foods should be required to have lights on their spreaders because they are driving long distances on town roads at all hours of the night.

"They're out there 24/7 on canning days. I would like to send them a letter and at least let them know we expect them to have more than minimum lighting on their vehicles," Janeshek said Monday.

"New manure spreaders have tail lights on them, which is what you need with more traffic and people going faster on town roads."

Town Chairman Francis Kleckner said he was asked by Ozaukee County officials to drive the Lakeside tractor to determine if it had to be stopped to make the turn.

"In my opinion, it did not," he said. "But on a foggy night, he may have stopped to see where to turn."

The question, he said, is whether Lakeside Foods should be treated as a commercial or farm operation.

Lakeside Foods should find temporary storage for vegetable byproducts left from the canning process so it doesn't have to take them to fields when its foggy or late at night, Kleckner said.