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PRESS RELEASE

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SANTA CRUZ MAN WHO SHOT FIREMAN SENTENCED AFTER PLEADING TO TWO STRIKES

People v Jacob Thomas Kirkendall; 17CR006035

SALINAS, California- Monterey County District Attorney Jeannine M. Pacioni announced today that on April 26 Judge Pamela Butler sentenced Jacob Thomas Kirkendall, age 26, of Santa Cruz to fourteen years of felony probation, the first year of which he will serve in a locked mental health facility. Kirkendall's status in the locked facility will remain subject to periodic review by Judge Butler with input from the medical professionals at the facility and Monterey County Probation.

In 2009, when Kirkendall was seventeen years old, he survived electrocution by fallen, live power lines at Rio del Mar Beach in Santa Cruz County. He tried to put out an electrical fire by throwing water on the flames, but inadvertently electrocuted himself. He spent nearly 100 days in a coma and suffered brain damage. Additionally, he suffers from diagnosed mental illness.

On the evening of December 11, 2017, Kirkendall recklessly drove his red truck around Peter Harris on Nacimiento-Ferguson Road. Harris was driving home in his U.S. Department of Forestry Ford Explorer. As a Division Fire Chief, he had just completed his shift working the Ventana fire near Big Sur.

Immediately after driving past him, Kirkendall parked his truck diagonally across the road, blocking the entire roadway. This left Harris no room to drive around Kirkendall's truck. Kirkendall quickly exited his truck and retrieved a shotgun. Harris started to make a three-point turn when Kirkendall aimed at him and fired. Several pellets from the buckshot hit Harris in the back of his head, neck, shoulder, and back and lodged under his skin.

Despite this, Harris managed to turn his Explorer around, drive in the opposite direction, and warn oncoming vehicles about Kirkendall. Kirkendall led Monterey County Sheriff's deputies, and California Highway Patrol officers on a high-speed chase that ended on Fort Hunter-Liggett.

On February 13, 2019, Kirkendall pled guilty to two strikes: (1) assault with a firearm, with a personal use of a firearm enhancement - a violent strike; and (2) assault with a deadly weapon. If Kirkendall violates the terms and conditions of his probation, he could be sentenced to state prison for a term of up to fourteen years, eight months. Kirkendall also pled guilty to delaying or obstructing a police officer.

The case was investigated by Sergeant Brian Hoskins, Detectives Shaheen Jorgensen and Arras Wilson, and deputies Scott Davis and Abel Munoz of the Monterey County Sheriff's Office, as well as Investigators Jorge Gutierrez and John Coletti of the Monterey County District Attorney's Office.