

Salinas father in fatal crash case placed on psychiatric hold

Sentencing delayed after drug overdose

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Luis Armando Molina

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A Salinas man who crashed his SUV in August, killing his 6-year-old daughter, overdosed on sleeping pills hours before he was scheduled for sentencing Tuesday, his attorney said.

After hearing from attorneys and a licensed clinical psychologist, Monterey County Superior Court Judge Adrienne Grover decided to bring the case back Thursday to receive the mental-health assessment of Luis Armando Molina.

Thomas Worthington, Molina's private Salinas attorney, said his client will undergo a 72-hour mental evaluation.

Worthington said he was told that Molina overdosed about 3 a.m. Tuesday on sleeping pills at his home. Emergency crews at the scene assessed Molina before deciding to transport him to Natividad Medical Center, where he remains, Worthington said.

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Molina faces a maximum of 13 years in prison after pleading no contest in December to four felony counts of child endangerment, one of which had an inflicting-great-bodily-injury enhancement attached. The CHP has said Molina, 34, crashed his SUV Aug. 3 while chasing after a pickup he believed contained his stolen motorcycle on northbound Highway 101, south of Boronda Road.

Worthington declined to say whether Molina had tried to take his life by overdosing or where his client got the pills.

"You can only imagine the horror that he's going through and the torture that he's going through, and the emotional toll of a person that goes through something like this," he said. "It's only understandable that his emotions are in chaos."

During Tuesday's hearing, Worthington requested that the sentencing proceed sooner rather than later. Molina's mental status will be reported to the judge Thursday, when it will be determined whether sentencing will proceed March 6.

"As I said in court, it seems to me that an overriding, overarching consideration is to get this behind him," said Worthington, referring to the court proceedings. "Of course, he'll never get behind the loss of his daughter. But you cannot even start moving toward healing until this court process is concluded."