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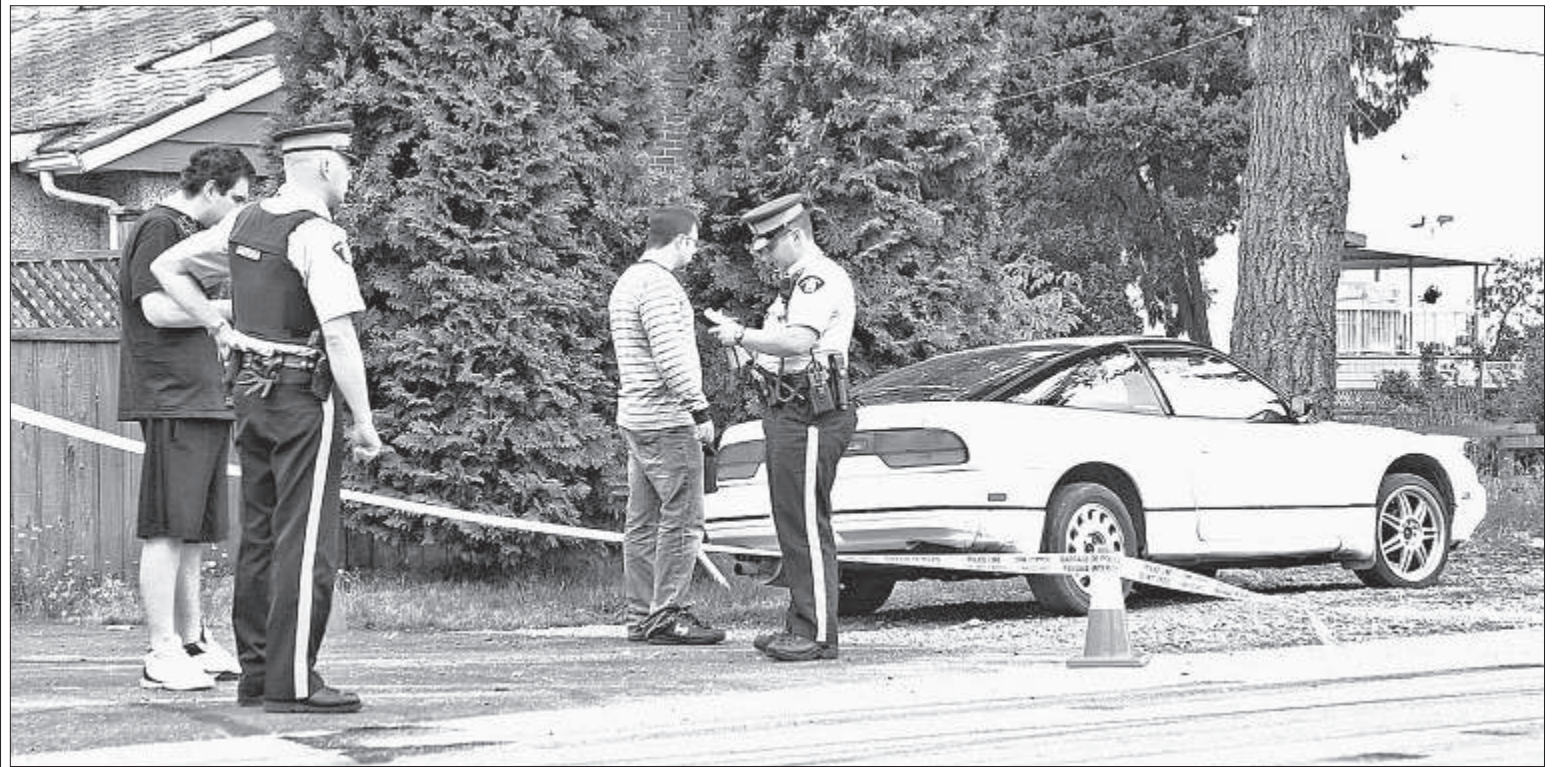
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CRIME



STEPHEN LISIK/COQUITLAM NOW

Police in Port Coquitlam interview area residents after an injured passenger from a car crash was found nearby.

# Man charged after woman dumped by side of road following car crash

Woman in hospital with brain injury after she was found near Port Coquitlam cemetery

BY DARAH HANSEN  
VANCOUVER SUN

A 22-year-old Port Coquitlam man has been criminally charged in connection with what police are calling a "very disturbing" car accident that has left a young woman in hospital with head injuries.

Kenneth Lars Baekgaard is alleged to have been behind the wheel of a Ford Explorer when it went off the road near the Port Coquitlam cemetery in the early morning hours of Aug. 15. The vehicle rolled, badly injuring his female passenger, Ashley Nicholls.

But rather than call for help, police allege Baekgaard and a friend, who showed up at the scene in a second vehicle, drove the near-

lifeless Nicholls to the intersection of Lougheed Hwy. and Cambridge Street and dumped her at the side of the road.

"This incident was unusual and very disturbing to witnesses at the scene as well as for investigators," Sgt. Dave Stewart of the Coquitlam RCMP Traffic Section said in a media release.

"You have to wonder how anyone could just leave an injured person on the side of the road without calling for help," he said.

Nicholls was later rushed to hospital after she was found by startled area residents. To date, she remains in hospital with an apparent brain injury.

Meanwhile, police issued an arrest warrant for Baekgaard after they were able to narrow down the investigation using witness testi-

mony and evidence pieced together from the two crime scenes.

The suspect was located Sept. 24 after he was spotted in Coquitlam by an RCMP officer while on routine patrol.

"As awful as the circumstances of this incident are, we are pleased with the progress of the investigation ... and we are very grateful to everyone who took action that night or has spoken to our team during the investigation," Stewart said.

Baekgaard made his first appearance before provincial court in Port Coquitlam last week where he was formally charged with dangerous driving causing bodily harm, criminal negligence causing bodily harm and failure to stop at an accident scene.

He has since been released on

conditions. His next scheduled court appearance is Oct. 5.

Police say the investigation into the incident continues and would not comment on whether charges were pending against the driver of the second vehicle.

According to court records, Baekgaard was charged in 2007 with three Motor Vehicle Act counts, including driving without due care and attention, failure to produce a driver's licence and violating restrictions on his driver's licence.

Those charges were eventually dismissed due to the non-appearance of the prosecution in the case.

dahansen@vancouvernews.com



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