

Orange County News 

CHP suit over leaked photos to go to trial

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SANTA ANA, Calif. (KABC) -- A lawsuit, filed against the California Highway Patrol in connection with leaked photos of a grisly automobile accident in Orange County, will go to trial. A state appellate court made that decision Thursday following the state Supreme Court's refusal Tuesday to hear the case.

The lawsuit was filed by the family of a Ladera Heights woman against two CHP employees, Aaron Reich and Thomas O'Donnell, for negligence and violation of privacy. The suit alleges the two officers released photos of Nikki Catsouras after the deadly October 31, 2006 accident.

Attorneys argued in the appellate court hearings whether the family had a right to privacy regarding the release of information such as photographs. The appellate court said they did.

The lawsuit alleges the officers forwarded the photos to personal e-mail accounts which later ended up on hundreds of other websites. O'Donnell has said he sent them to his personal e-mail to study them for educational reasons, according to Bremer's co-counsel Tyler Offenhauser.

O'Donnell still works for the CHP while Reich has retired.

City News Service contributed to this report.

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