

## **Metro Officer charged in fatal river crash**

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By IAN DEMSKY  
*Staff Writer*

A Metro police officer was indicted yesterday on charges of killing a fellow officer when he drove his car through a guardrail and into the Cumberland River. Evidence showed Bishop was speeding.

A Davidson County grand jury indicted Officer William Bishop, 32, on charges of reckless vehicular homicide, two counts of reckless endangerment, all felonies, and a misdemeanor count of drag racing, police said in a statement. Vehicular homicide, the most serious of the charges, carries a three-to-six-year prison term.

Officer Paul Cleveland, 28, Bishop's friend and roommate, was unable to escape from the submerged car and drowned in the Sept. 6 crash.

"Officer Bishop accepts full responsibility for the death of his friend," Bishop's attorney, David Raybin, said yesterday. "He is prepared to accept whatever consequences the judge decides shall happen.

"He is very, very remorseful."

District Attorney General Torry Johnson said it's always difficult to charge a police officer with crimes.

"We hate for that to have to happen," he said. "But when the evidence is there, we have an obligation to go forward."

The off-duty Bishop lost control of his 2004 Pontiac Grand Prix on Howse Avenue off Neely's Bend in Madison, 150 yards from the home the two officers shared.

Tests given two hours after the car plunged into the river showed that Bishop did not have alcohol in his system at the time.

Bishop and Officer Cody Quinn, a second passenger in the car, escaped through the car's sunroof, which was broken by the crash into the river. Cleveland was unable to get out and died.

The "black box" data recorder removed from the car and taken for analysis showed that Bishop had been speeding, Raybin said yesterday.

"That's consistent with his own recollection," he said.

Witnesses also reported the driver was speeding and tried to stop before the car tumbled down a tree-strewn incline into the river below.

The recorders, in many newer-model Ford and General Motors cars, track information such as a vehicle's speed, use of brakes, air-bag deployment and whether seat belts were used.

This case is the first in which local authorities are using the "black box" from a private vehicle as part of a crash investigation, officials have said.

"Certainly there was very thorough investigation done by the police," Johnson said. "The black box was a portion of evidence that was important and considered."

Raybin said he was going to research whether the drag-racing charge was appropriate because only one car was involved.

Bishop surrendered to authorities and was released from the Davidson County jail on \$10,000 bond, Raybin said. His first court appearance, an arraignment, has not been scheduled but will come early next year.

The day after the accident Bishop was decommissioned — his badge and gun were taken away and he lost his arrest powers — and assigned to desk duty during the investigation. He has been on the Metro police force for three years.