



# ERIK NASARENKO

VENTURA COUNTY DISTRICT ATTORNEY

## NEWS RELEASE



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Contact: Joey Buttitta  
Title: Communications Manager/PIO  
Phone: (805) 767-3400  
Email: [Joey.Buttitta@venturacounty.gov](mailto:Joey.Buttitta@venturacounty.gov)

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### Ventura Man Convicted in Hit & Run that Killed Two Dogs and Injured Driver

VENTURA, Calif. – District Attorney Erik Nasarenko announced today that a Ventura County jury found Leonardo Palafox (DOB 10/13/88), of Ventura, guilty on December 15, 2025, of three felony and three misdemeanor counts for a violent hit and run. The jury convicted Palafox of felony leaving the scene of an accident, two felony counts of cruelty to an animal, destroying or concealing evidence, and two counts of hit and run driving.

On February 6, 2025, Palafox was driving a blue truck eastbound on Thompson Boulevard in the City of Ventura when he ran a steady red light at the intersection of Thompson Boulevard and McMillan Avenue. The truck narrowly missed a pedestrian in the crosswalk but struck and killed the pedestrian's two dogs. Palafox then collided head on with a vehicle that was stopped at the red light in the opposite lane, causing injuries to the driver.

After the collision, Palafox reversed the truck and fled the scene. The vehicle was later found abandoned less than a mile away with the license plates removed. Ventura Police officers noticed fresh front-end damage and strands of dog hair on the front of the truck. Officers collected a DNA swab from the steering wheel of the abandoned truck. Forensic analysis by the Ventura County Crime Lab determined that the swab contained a single DNA profile, which matched Palafox, whose profile was already in the system. The truck was registered to Palafox's cousin at the time of the accident.

Deputy District Attorney Patrick Benjamin, a member of the Ventura County District Attorney's Office General Trials Unit, prosecuted the case.

"This case presented a terrible set of circumstances for the victims," Mr. Benjamin said. "Thanks to the thorough investigation done by the Ventura Police Department and Ventura County Crime Laboratory, we were able to hold the defendant accountable for his actions. I hope the jury's findings help the victims receive some closure to this tragedy."

Palafox is scheduled to be sentenced on January 14, 2026, at 8:30 a.m. in courtroom 14 of the Ventura County Superior Court. Following the verdict, Palafox was remanded into custody and is being held without bail. He faces a maximum of four years and four months in state prison.

**Case: 2025015630**

**Defendant Information:**

Leonardo Palafox (DOB 10/13/88)

Ventura

**Charges convicted of:**

- VC 20001(a) – Leaving the scene of an accident
- (2 counts) PC 597(b) – Cruelty to an animal
- PC 135 – Destroying/concealing evidence
- (2 counts) VC 20002(a) – Hit-run driving