

RIVERSIDE: Police car hits woman



DAVID KECK/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Investigators from the Riverside police Major Accident Investigation Team take measurements after a woman was hit by a Riverside police car at Emerald and Madison in Casa Blanca on Sunday morning, May 13, 2012.

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Published: 13 May 2012 04:21 PM

A Riverside police cruiser hit and critically injured a woman as she crossed Madison Street in front of St. Anthony's Church in Casa Blanca on Sunday morning.

An ambulance took the woman to Riverside Community Hospital minutes after the 7:49 a.m. accident. Though the Riverside County coroner had not officially recorded the death of the woman by early Sunday evening, her son said he had heard from the hospital about 3 p.m. that Isabel Pablo Tomas had died.

"The hospital tells me I have to come," said Pedro Tomas, who runs a small store a glance down Madison Street from where his mother was hit. "I have to make her go in peace."

A police news release stated that the woman was crossing from the west side of Madison to the east, outside the crosswalk, when an on-duty officer in a marked patrol car struck her. The woman suffered major injuries, it stated. Members of the Police Department's Major Accident Investigation Team were investigating.

The name of the officer involved in the accident was not included in the release. A call to Lt. Eric Charrette for further details was not immediately returned.

There were no sirens, no flashing lights on the patrol car when Angel Gaytan Jr. went to find out what had happened. Gaytan said he was in the front yard of his home on Emerald Street when he heard a loud bang and walked to the nearby corner where the woman had been hit.

He saw her lying on the pavement perhaps 20 feet outside of the crosswalk. A male officer sat on the hood of his car, his head buried in his hands as he shook. An officer in another patrol car that had apparently been following in tandem was calling for help, Gaytan said.

Gaytan said he noticed that one of the woman's sandals was under the patrol car that had hit her, which had come to a stop on the crosswalk spanning from Emerald across Madison. He figured there were about 10 people near the corner there who saw the crash, including three women on the corner of Emerald next to the church selling flowers and small gifts for Mother's Day.

As for the woman who had been hit, Gaytan figured she was dead.

"She was unresponsive," he said.

No one looking out from the open garage door of the Quintero home on Emerald a few houses down from where police traffic investigators worked Sunday afternoon knew much about the injured woman. They knew she lived nearby, but didn't know exactly where.

Rudy Quintero, 35, said he thought she was from Guatemala and had lived in the neighborhood about five years. They saw her walking about every day. She seemed friendly and waved to most everyone she saw, a little dog tailing her every move. On Sunday morning, it was a little white Chihuahua, he said.

Rudy Quintero's sister, Angelina Quintero, said that Madison and Emerald is a dangerous corner, despite the wide crosswalk and broad fluorescent yellow sign warning motorists to watch

for pedestrians. It's especially hazardous on Sunday mornings, when hundreds flock to St. Anthony's to celebrate morning Mass.

"It's a busy, busy street," she said of Madison. "People just don't stop for people walking there."

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