

Human remains found

Detectives say no more answers till forensics

Statesman Examiner, By Jodi Miller

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The Steven's County Sheriff's Office responded on Sunday to the report of a "burned out" truck in a remote spot in the Flat Creek area southwest of Northport. Hunters reported the vehicle, a mid-size four-wheel drive truck, and investigators found what they believe to be human remains.

"The remains are fragmented", explained Stevens County Sheriff Craig Thayer. "At this early stage, there is considerable damage that we have to work through to try to make an identification. As to whether or not we're dealing with one or two individuals, we can't say at this time," Thayer added.

The remains, found both in and outside the truck, had been scattered by animals because the fire left openings in the vehicle.

"The truck burned, causing extensive damage," Thayer said. "The vehicle itself has been thoroughly gone through. We've identified the vehicle and removed it from the mountain."

The license plate was intact and investigators are "attempting to make contact with the registered owner," Thayer said.

They don't know yet if the owner is the victim or suspect, or involved at all.

The remains have been sent to the Forensic Institute at Holy Family Hospital in Spokane for analysis.

Forensic exam tomorrow

"We have been in contact with Dr. George Lindholm, a forensic pathologist," Thayer said. "Tentatively, we've set up forensic examination of the various remains... for (Wednesday) afternoon. There'll also be a forensic dentist there."

Investigators also found "possessions" at the scene that may help them identify the victim or victims. Detectives have not ruled out that the remains are those of Josh Schaefer, the 21 year old Californian missing since the Northport Barter Fair on June 10. Detectives have contacted Schaefer's family about the possessions.

Stevens County Coroner Jerry Wetle added that forensics, not possessions, would be the primary method of identification.

The Washington State Patrol (WSP) Crime Lab and the WSP Total Station Team responded to the scene, as well as Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms agents, who have "particular expertise in arson