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June 16, 2023

### WHITTAKER SENTENCED TO 20 YEARS FOR LEAVING SCENE OF ACCIDENT INVOLVING DEATH

State Attorney Melissa Nelson announces the Honorable Judge Tatiana Salvador sentenced James Hugh Whittaker to 20 years in Florida State Prison for Leaving the Scene of an Accident Involving Death. The victim, Shawn Thompson, died as a result of the crash. Whittaker pleaded guilty to the charge on a June 8, 2023, court date.

On Aug. 3, 2021, Whittaker's Chevrolet Silverado ran a red light at over twice the speed limit and crashed into Thompson's Hyundai Elantra at the intersection of Beaver Street and Cahoon Road in Jacksonville. Officers with the Jacksonville Sheriff's Office and Florida Highway Patrol were dispatched to the scene. Thompson was taken to UF Health Jacksonville where he was pronounced deceased. Whittaker left his truck and ran from the scene. Police searched the area, but they did not find Whittaker. However, Whittaker left behind his truck, personal items, and blood stains on the airbag. A crime scene analyst with Florida Department of Law Enforcement gathered DNA from the scene, which matched Whittaker. Surveillance footage from a nearby auto shop captured the crash. The video shows Whittaker driving through a red light and colliding with the passenger side of the Thompson's car.

The case was investigated by the Florida Highway Patrol and was prosecuted by Assistant State Attorney John Kalinowski.