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NEWS RELEASE

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Man Charged in Cousin's Death After Vehicle Strikes Light Pole

A driver was charged today with vehicular manslaughter for the death of his cousin who was killed when the car they were in struck a light pole in Lincoln Heights earlier this week, the Los Angeles County District Attorney's Office announced.

Jose Noe Lugo (11/10/72) was charged in case BA444374 with one count each of gross vehicular manslaughter while intoxicated, driving under the influence and driving with a .08 percent blood alcohol content causing injury. He pleaded not guilty to the charges and is scheduled to return March 9 for a preliminary hearing setting.

Prosecutors said at about 3:20 a.m. on Feb. 22, Lugo was driving a car that had just exited Interstate 5 when he allegedly struck a light pole. His cousin, Juan Mendez, was a passenger sitting in the front seat and wasn't wearing a seatbelt when he was killed.

Lugo left the crash site but returned and was arrested.

If convicted as charged, Lugo faces up to 10 years in state prison.

The case remains under investigation by the Los Angeles Police Department.

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[About the Los Angeles County District Attorney's Office](#)

Los Angeles County District Attorney Jackie Lacey leads the largest local prosecutorial office in the nation. Her staff of nearly 1,000 attorneys, 300 investigators and 800 support staff members is dedicated to protecting our community through the fair and ethical pursuit of justice and the safeguarding of crime victims' rights.