

Licensed car mechanic charged with manslaughter in customer's death

Steven Jalbert pleaded not guilty Tuesday

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BARRE, Vt. —A Barre man was arrested Tuesday after investigators said he didn't thoroughly inspect a vehicle involved in a fatal crash.

Officers arrested Steven Jalbert on charges of manslaughter and reckless endangerment.

Investigators said Jalbert inspected Donald and Elizabeth Ibey's 1992 Chevrolet Corsica in May 2014, but didn't inspect the car well enough before passing it. Elizabeth, 83, died in a car crash two months later. Her death could have been prevented, investigators said.

"When you go in and you pay the fees to have your vehicle inspected you're depending on that inspection mechanic to take the time to go through examine that vehicle and tell you 'yes that vehicle is safe to drive,'" said Glen Button, director of enforcement at the DMV.

The Vermont Department of Motor Vehicles has 1,100 inspection locations across the state and 5,900 licensed mechanics.

Investigators said Ibey's brake lines and rocker panels were rusted, corroded and in a visibly unsafe condition when Jalbert passed the car.

According to the police affidavit, Jalbert didn't test the brakes, remove a wheel, put the vehicle on a lift or test it on the road. Investigators said AJ's Sunoco, where Jalbert works, was using an out-of-date manual.

Button said it is imperative for mechanics to follow the steps the state has laid out for annual safety equipment inspections.

"It really is critical. They're examining the suspension of the vehicle, the steering mechanism of the vehicle, they're looking at the exhaust. Any of those systems, if there is a problem it could really be tragic," he said.

Jalbert pleaded not guilty Tuesday. He faces up to 16 years in prison and a fine of \$4,000 if convicted on all charges.