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Driver who hit police cruiser gets 9½ years

A Springfield man who rammed a West Springfield police cruiser in August 2001 has been sentenced to nine and a half years in the Massachusetts Correctional Institution at Cedar Junction on a variety of charges.

Richard Velazquez, who was 22 at the time of the incident, was sentenced on April 29. He was found guilty of assault and battery with a dangerous weapon (the car); assault and battery on a police officer; assault and battery (on a woman); and resisting arrest.

The incident began when police responded to a report of a domestic disturbance involving Mr. Velazquez and a woman on Aug. 13, 2001. By the time police arrived, Mr. Velazquez had left and was said to be driving in the area. A cruiser sighted Mr. Velazquez and began following him, when Mr. Velazquez rammed a parked cruiser.

Patrolman Robert Wilbur was in the parked cruiser. He momentarily lost consciousness, and suffered a separated shoulder, a chest contusion, and other injuries. His cruiser was heavily damaged, from the driver's side front door to the front end. "I didn't have time to think," Officer Wilbur said at the time.

The incident occurred off Riverdale Street, near Balise Collision Repair Center.

- P.T.D.

Is their cruiser
more important
than a person?