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(Neb.)-Trucker In Fatal I-80 Crash May Have Fallen Asleep



By: Roxie Graham-Marski Posted at: 09/26/2012 09:32 AM

Photo: Josef Slezak

SIDNEY, Neb. (AP) - An Illinois trucker whose tractor-trailer slammed into stalled traffic in western Nebraska may have fallen asleep behind the wheel.

A Nebraska state trooper testified in Cheyenne County Court Monday that Josef Slezak had been on duty for nearly 15 hours when he crashed into the back of a car on Interstate 80.

The car driven by Christopher Schmidt, of Gaithersburg, Md., was pushed into another vehicle that was carrying his pregnant wife, Diana Schmidt, and their two children. The family was killed.

Slezak left Milwaukee, Wis., around 3 p.m. on Sept. 8. Authorities believe fatigue was a factor, because Slezak didn't slow down before the early-morning crash.

Slezak is charged with four counts of manslaughter and five counts of motor vehicle homicide.