

Massachusetts woman allegedly steals truck, goes on rampage, strikes and drags police officer, arrested in McDonald's drive-thru

On July 6th 2021 at about 8:45 AM, Worcester Police officers were dispatched to the area of Lake Ave for a report of a stolen company pick-up truck. Officers spoke with a male who reported that a female stranger climbed into his vehicle and drove away.

The company owner had GPS in the vehicle and told police the vehicle was showing up in the area of Pelham St. While officers were on the way to Pelham St, they were flagged down by a driver whose vehicle had been struck by the stolen truck on Belmont St.

An officer discovered the stolen vehicle on Charlton St. The officer activated his blue lights, got out of his cruiser, and approached the stolen vehicle. The operator, later identified as Johanna Gardell, thirty-eight-years-old of Oriol Drive, drove away as the officer walked toward her. The officer got back into his cruiser and followed her at a low rate of speed, but she did not stop. Ms. Gardell began to increase her speed on Main St and drove through red lights. The officer deactivated his lights and sirens and stopped following her for safety reasons.

As the vehicle drove north on Main St, there was heavy traffic and it stopped near 939 Main St. Ms. Gardell drove in the wrong lane against traffic in an attempt to go around the stopped vehicles, and drove into a van. At this point, two

officers working a detail and another officer in the area approached the vehicle in an attempt to extract Ms. Gardell. She backed up the vehicle at a high rate of speed and struck a cruiser behind her, and knocked down and dragged one of the detail officers. Officers pursued the stolen vehicle at a low rate of speed before the pursuit was called off for safety reasons.

Ms. Gardell went to the drive-through at McDonald's on Shrewsbury St in an attempt to order food. Officers approached her in two vehicles. She intentionally struck one of the vehicles, but went off the road and got her vehicle stuck in the mulch on McDonald's property. Officers approached the vehicle and were able to pull her out of it, while she fought and struggled.

She was placed in handcuffs and is charged with Failure to Stop for Police, Marked Lanes Violation, Operating to Endanger, Red Light Violation, Leaving the Scene of an Accident w/Property Damage, Leaving the Scene of an Accident w/Personal Injury, Assault and Battery by means of a Dangerous Weapon (Motor Vehicle), Assault by means of a Dangerous Weapon (Motor Vehicle), Malicious Mischief to Motor Vehicle, Disturbing the Peace, Disorderly Conduct, Operating a Motor Vehicle After Suspension (Driver's License), and Use of Motor Vehicle without Authority. She will be arraigned in court.

The officer who was struck by the vehicle was injured and transported to the hospital but his injuries are not life-threatening.