

Sweet Home man accused of assaulting girlfriend's infant

by Cheryl McDermott

A 19-year-old Sweet Home man has been arrested and charged with eight crimes in connection with an alleged assault on his girlfriend's three-month-old child, detectives reported Tuesday.

According to a Benton County Sheriff's Office news release, Michael Jay Henthorne was babysitting Payton Morris while the baby's mother and his girlfriend, Vanessa Morris, was away from her residence in Adair Village at 8828 NE Con Court. Henthorne reportedly is not the child's biological father.

Deputies were summoned by emergency room (ER) personnel at Good Samaritan Hospital in Corvallis late on the evening of January 16 after Payton was brought in by ambulance following a 911 call placed by the suspect who had reported a choking incident.

ER personnel determined there may have been an injury to the infant's throat, and he was transferred to Legacy Emanuel Children's Hospital in Portland for further evaluation and treatment. As of Tuesday he remained in the intensive care unit.

During an interview with detectives, Henthorne said he was unable to remove a napkin that lodged in the baby's throat after it was inhaled.

Following an investigation, Henthorne was arrested on January 18 and lodged in the Benton County Corrections facility. He has been charged with first-degree assault, criminal mistreatment, and three counts each of second- and third-degree assault. Bail was set at \$200,000.

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