



# Office of the District Attorney Stanislaus County

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## **PRESS RELEASE**

### **For Immediate Release**

Date: December 9, 2021  
Re: William Thomas Schendel  
Murder case sentencing

### **For More Information Contact:**

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**Modesto, California** - Stanislaus County District Attorney Birgit Fladager announced today that William Thomas Schendel, age 58, of Modesto, was sentenced on December 6, 2021, to serve 16 years to life in state prison. Deputy District Attorney Samuel Luzadas prosecuted the case on behalf of the People.

On May 1, 2018, family members were trying to locate 40-year-old Aimee Crawford after not hearing from her. They tried to locate Crawford's cellphone using a phone app. They located it inside the car of Crawford's boyfriend, William Schendel, at a tow yard in Escalon. Schendel had been involved in a head-on traffic collision in Escalon, about 18 miles from the murder scene. He suffered major injuries and had to be extracted from the car for transportation to the hospital.

EMS notified the family that only one person, Schendel, was in the vehicle involved in the crash. Hearing this, the family returned to Crawford's house on Horseshoe Road in Oakdale. Upon entry, one family member found Aimee Crawford fully clothed, lying dead in several inches of water in the shower. Sheriff's detectives called to the scene noted blood throughout the house but no signs of forced entry. An autopsy determined that Crawford had been strangled and struck over fifty times on her head, face and body with a metal object. Defensive wounds on both hands and forearms indicated she had been involved in a violent struggle. She had multiple skull fractures and brain contusions. The tip of someone's left thumb was collected from the victim's hair. Technicians were able to lift a partial fingerprint from that thumb and it was matched to Schendel.

On May 3<sup>rd</sup>, Schendel was arrested in the hospital. He refused to answer any questions. Upon his release from the hospital on May 23, 2018, he was booked into the Stanislaus County Public Safety Center and subsequently charged with murder. Detective Michael Fisher was instrumental in gathering all the necessary evidence to support prosecution.

On September 24, 2021 before Judge Dawna Reeves, Schendel pled guilty to second-degree murder and admitted an enhancement for the personal use of a deadly weapon.

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At a sentencing hearing on December 6, 2021 surviving family members submitted written victim impact statements to the court about how losing their loved one impacted their lives. At the conclusion of the hearing, Reeves sentenced Schendel to 15 years to life in state prison for the murder and an additional one year in state prison for personally using a deadly weapon during the killing.

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