



Eastern Oregon officer arraigned on sex abuse allegations

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By



Mark Benton Ashcraft

A 36-year-old police officer was arraigned in Umatilla County today on felony sex-abuse charges involving a child.

The district attorney's office said Mark Benton Ashcraft of Athena was being held in Umatilla County Jail on \$50,000 bail. He's charged with sex abuse in the second degree, sodomy in the third degree, and online sexual corruption of a child in the first degree.

The arrest came as a surprise to officials in Athena, which has a population of 1,270.

"We know as much as you do," said Dyann Swanson, Athena city recorder.

She said Ashcraft will be put on paid administrative leave and that the city will seek legal advice on what to do.

"It's an unfortunate thing," she said. "But he's only been arrested. He's not been convicted."

Ashcraft is one of two officers in the city. He was hired in December 2007 after working nine years in Pilot Rock.

Swanson said, "He's been a perfect police officer. We have not had any problem with him at all."

Ashcraft, who was arrested Monday afternoon, is due next in court at the end of the month.

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