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**Former Sampson County deputy accused of statutory rape**By **Nancy McCleary**

Staff writer

**CLINTON** - A former Sampson County deputy is accused of sexually assaulting a minor in April 2011, authorities said.

Richard Matthew West, 30, of Clinton, was charged Tuesday with statutory rape, second-degree rape, taking indecent liberties with a minor and contributing to the delinquency of a minor, according to a news release from the Sampson County Sheriff's Office.

The State Bureau of Investigation, which is handling the investigation, filed the charges and arrested West, said Sheriff's Office Capt. Eric Pope.

Sampson investigators turned the case over to the SBI after learning that the suspect in the April 23, 2011, incident was an off-duty deputy, the release said.

West, who was hired as a deputy in September 2009, was immediately placed on administrative leave until a preliminary investigation was completed, the release said.

The SBI declined to provide details of the investigation, spokeswoman Noelle Talley said in an email Thursday.

West was terminated April 25, 2011, as a result of information developed during the investigation, the release said.

He had no record of disciplinary action, the release said.

West's bail was set at \$250,000. He is scheduled for a first appearance in Sampson District Court today, according to the SBI.

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West