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Eastern Montana sheriff's deputy charged with having sex with teen while on duty

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Valley County Sheriffs Deputy Luke Strommen has been accused of sexual interactions with a teenager while he was on duty and in uniform.

Strommen was charged Thursday in Valley County District Court with sexual abuse of children. A summons was issued Monday.

According to charging documents, Strommen began a sexual relationship with a 17-year-old he met while doing a traffic stop in 2014. The two began to text, call and meet in person for sexual encounters, a Division of Criminal Investigation found.

The teen told investigators Strommen, born in 1977, was in uniform and on duty for "a majority of the time" that they met for sexual encounters.

Strommen told the teen to send him a "hot" picture of herself to an email address he provided and said, "I'll check It At My office."

The victim told investigators that while their relationship was consensual, she believed Strommen was "very sly, conniving and power-hungry," according to charges.

Strommen has been on paid administrative leave **since June 15**, when Sheriff Vernon Buerkle asked DCI to look into allegations of misconduct, Buerkle said.

The allegations relate to an incident from four years ago, Buerkle said.

Strommen was previously running for Valley County Sheriff but dropped out of the race Aug. 13, according to the Clerk and Recorder's Office.

That leaves two others, Joe Horn and Tom Boyer, as the remaining candidates in the running for the sheriff's race.

On Aug. 15, Strommen was demoted from undersheriff to deputy, Buerkle said. The undersheriff position has since been filled.

Buerkle said the Montana Association of Counties advised Valley County to let Strommen proceed through the standard due process hearing, which he said they would do.

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