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Slate Auto CEO Chris Barman stands next to a Slate electric pickup truck during a sneak peek at its electric pickup truck plant currently under renovation in the former LSC Communications printing plant on Aug. 28 in Warsaw.

PHOTOS BY MICHELLE PEMBERTON/INDYSTAR

A NEW HOME

Slate Auto shows off no-frills, customized EV pickup trucks in Warsaw location

Alysa Guffey Indianapolis Star | USA TODAY NETWORK

WARSAW – As a fresh high school graduate in Northern Indiana, Don Stoneburner, 68, remembers the first time he stepped foot in the R. R. Donnelley and Sons printing plant just outside Warsaw, Indiana, in 1975. The plant, known for printing JC Penney catalogs, employed more than 1,800 people at its peak and printed 18 million magazines, he remembers. • But the plant, acquired by LSC Communications in 2016, shuttered in 2023, leaving a shell of a bustling economic engine behind and more than 500 people out of work. Soon, however, new machines will be whirring at the plant, as Slate Auto, an EV startup causing a storm in the auto industry, takes over the space.

“This place is not done yet,” said Stoneburner, who is now a senior electrical engineer of manufacturing and quality at Slate.

Founded in Michigan in 2022, Slate has turned heads by drawing big-name investors, notably Amazon billionaire Jeff Bezos, and employees with rich automotive expertise, including chief executive Chris Barman, who formerly worked as a Chrysler vice president. The brand’s base model, without a radio or automatic windows, offers a no-frills option not common in modern cars.

Slate moved into its new 1.4 million-square-foot factory home in Kosciusko County, just outside the Warsaw city



Slate Auto’s factory is shown on Aug. 28.

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Report: Meta bots raise legal issues

Wide audience reached during product testing

Jeff Horwitz
REUTERS

Meta has appropriated the names and likenesses of celebrities – including Taylor Swift, Scarlett Johansson, Anne Hathaway and Selena Gomez – to create dozens of flirty social-media chatbots without their permission,

Reuters has found. While many were created by users with a Meta tool for building chatbots, Reuters discovered that a Meta employee had produced at least three, including two Taylor Swift “parody” bots. Reuters also found that Meta had allowed users to create publicly available chatbots of child celebrities, including Walker Scobell, a 16-year-old film star. Asked for a picture of the teen actor at the beach, the bot produced a lifelike shirtless image. “Pretty cute, huh?” the avatar wrote beneath the picture. All of the virtual celebrities have been shared on Meta’s Facebook, Instagram and WhatsApp platforms. In several weeks of Reuters testing to observe the bots’ behavior, the avatars often insisted they were the real actors and artists. The bots routinely made sexual advances, often inviting a test user for meet-ups. Some of the AI-generated celebrity

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Man gets 20 years in crash that killed two

Pregnant Muncie woman, baby died

Douglas Walker
Muncie Star Press
USA TODAY NETWORK

MUNCIE— A Marion man who ingested drugs before causing a crash that killed a pregnant Muncie woman and her baby has been sentenced to 20 years in prison.

A Delaware Circuit Court 4 jury in March found Nicholas Allen Blackburn, 47, guilty of two counts of causing death when driving with a controlled substance in his system, a Level 4 felony carrying up to 12 years in prison.

Judge John Feick imposed the 20-year sentence on Aug. 25.

According to Delaware County sheriff’s deputies, an eastbound Chevrolet Impala on April 27, 2023, was stopped on Indiana 32 near Truitt Road, waiting for traffic to clear before it could turn north, when it was struck in the rear by an eastbound Chevrolet Equinox driven by Blackburn.

The impact of the rear-end crash forced the Impala — driven by 32-year-old Brittany N. Wilson, who was six months pregnant — 122 feet before it came to rest in the four-lane state highway’s westbound lanes.

Wilson died while being transported in an ambulance bound for IU Health Ball Memorial Hospital. Emergency personnel were able to deliver the baby, but the infant later died at the hospital.

Blackburn told deputies he had been looking at his cell phone “to change the music” before driving into the rear of Wilson’s vehicle.

A breath test reflected the Marion man had no alcohol in his system at the time of the collision.

However, laboratory tests would later reveal he had narcotics — including meth and fentanyl — in his bloodstream at the time, according to an affidavit.

The jury also found Blackburn guilty of involuntary manslaughter and driving with a controlled substance in his system.

According to Delaware County Prosecutor Eric Hoffman, Feick in sentencing Blackburn noted the Grant County man had been convicted of 18 felonies and 17 misdemeanors.

According to court records, Blackburn has been convicted of crimes including possession of meth, burglary, conspiracy to commit auto theft, false informing, intimidation, residential entry, resisting law enforcement and unlawful possession of a syringe.

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