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# **Murder conviction overturned for Woodville man**

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BOWLING GREEN – Ohio's 6th District Court of Appeals today reversed the conviction of a Woodville man charged with driving into a railroad construction crew, killing one worker and injuring two others.

Cody Rickard, now 28, was found guilty by a jury in Wood County Common Pleas Court in January, 2014 of murder and two counts each of aggravated vehicular homicide, vehicular assault, and felonious assault.

The charges stemmed from an Oct. 28, 2013 crash near Bradner, Ohio that killed Paul Castle, 34, of Paintsville, Ky., and injured Jim Conley, 58, of Findlay and Luis Knott III, 58, of Banner, Ky.

Mr. Rickard allegedly drove through a barricade on Bradner Road, accelerated, and struck two poles before striking Mr. Castle and Mr. Conley who fell into Mr. Knott. Witnesses described Mr. Rickard as celebratory and erratic-acting after the crash and testified that he made statements about God and the devil.

Still, Mr. Rickard's defense attorney did not seek a mental evaluation for him or explore the option of a not guilty by reason of insanity plea.

The appeals court concluded that Mr. Rickard was prejudiced by his attorney's "failure to investigate the state of his mental health at the time of the accident."

The court further found reasonable probability that "a jury faced with evidence of a possible mental defect on the part of [Mr. Rickard] would reach a different result at a new trial."

Mr. Rickard, an inmate at the North Central Correctional Institution, was sentenced by Wood County Common Pleas Judge Alan Mayberry to life in prison with parole eligibility after 29 years. He also suspended Mr. Rickard's driver's license for life.