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Four-year-old drives mom's car to video store and home

SAND LAKE, MICHIGAN (AP) — At least he wasn't speeding.

A 4-year-old boy drove his mother's car to a video store a quarter-mile from their apartment in this town about 15 miles north of Grand Rapids.

Unable to reach the accelerator, the boy managed to put the car in gear and make his way to the store about 1:30 a.m. EST Friday, Sand Lake police said. Finding the store closed, the youngster began a slow trip home.

Weaving and with its headlights off, the car got the attention of Sgt. Jay Osga, who first thought he was following a car that had been left running at a gas pump. He flipped on his lights when the car turned into the apartment complex and struck a parked car. The boy put the car in reverse and struck Osga's cruiser.

"He knew how to go from forward to reverse," Osga said Monday. "The mother said she taught him how to drive by letting him sit on her lap and steer."

Osga then discovered the boy inside. The boy had started the car and backed out of a parking spot, apparently hitting one parked car, Osga said. He then turned down the street and headed to the video store. The mother's car also was damaged.



"He's 4 years old. His mom didn't even know he was up," Sand Lake Police Chief Doug Heugel told The Grand Rapids Press. "I don't think he even realizes what he did."

No charges will be filed against the boy or his mother, Heugel said.

Although the boy was unable to reach the accelerator, the car moved once it was put in gear because of power from the idling engine, Osga said.

It was the third time in six weeks that a west Michigan child was caught driving a vehicle.

A 7-year-old girl sustained minor injuries Dec. 23 after she took a van for a drive and collided with a car near her home in Ottawa County's Robinson Township. The other driver wasn't injured.

On Jan. 13, an 11-year-old Norton Shores boy took a school bus on a two-mile joyride that left smashed mailboxes and broken utility poles in its wake. There were no reported injuries.