

?Accident on US 150 claims life of Salem man, injures one

Written by Administrator

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? A two vehicle accident on U.S. Highway 150 in Galena last Tuesday afternoon claimed the life of a Salem man and injured a Greenville man.

According to information from the Indiana State Police Post in Sellersburg the accident occurred around 2:05 p.m. Tuesday afternoon.

A press release from the ISP stated that the preliminary investigation showed that a black Toyota Camry driven by Patrick Best, 57, of Greenville, crossed the center line at the edge of Galena and struck a semi-truck being driven by Randy Purlee, 58, of Salem.

The impact and Purlee's attempts to avoid the accident resulted in his truck, which was carrying sawdust for his employer, Koetter and Smith Wood Shavings, to careen off the roadway into a ditch, where it overturned and caught fire. Purlee was trapped inside.

Purlee's trailer and load of sawdust was dumped over the roadway which blocked the highway to traffic for the remainder of the day. US 150 remained closed overnight between Featherengill Road and Clover Creek Road while clean-up continued their work and utility crews repaired fiber-optic lines that were severely damaged as a result of the crash. Utility crews did their best to have the roadway open by the morning commute, but the road did not reopen until around noon on Wednesday. The Floyd County Highway Department placed detour signs directing motorists through the area. The detour route went through the Clover Creek Subdivision to Old Vincennes and onto Featherengill back to US 150.

Best was transported to the University of Louisville Hospital with non-specific serious injuries.

Representatives from Koetter and Smith Wood Shavings arrived on the scene a few minutes after the accident where they identified the driver as Purlee and assisted with the clean-up of the sawdust debris.

As a result of the accident AT&T fiber-optic lines were damaged which disrupted telephone and 911 service to the area for a period of time.

The Floyd County Prosecutor's Officer Combined Accident Reconstruction Team (CART) was called to the scene to investigate. CART was formed in July 2007 by Floyd County Prosecutor Keith Henderson to investigate all fatal crashes and crashes involving serious bodily injury with the potential for criminal charges. The team is comprised of members of the Floyd County, New Albany, and Indiana State Police Departments that have additional training in crash reconstruction and diagraming.

The CART Team continues to investigate this crash. As is standard in all fatal crashes, toxicology tests will be performed on both drivers, the results of which may take several weeks to confirm. The determination of any appropriate criminal charges will be decided once the investigation is completed and turned over to the Floyd County Prosecutor.