

Seven people injured, truck driver dies in recent county road accidents

Written by Marty Randall

Tuesday, 14 September 2010 00:00 - Last Updated Tuesday, 14 September 2010 10:47

Officers with the Scott County Sheriff's Department were busy investigating vehicular accidents over a recent 11-day stretch.

The series of seven accidents injured seven people and killed a semi-truck driver from Indianapolis.

Injury mishaps began on the afternoon of August 30 at the intersection of U.S. Highway 31 South and State Road 356.

Debra S. Elder, 58, Louisville, Ky., was driving east on S.R. 356 in her 2007 Ford Fusion. As she sat on Leota Road waiting to cross U.S. 31, Elder said another motorist "flagged her out." She hit a 2005 Chevy pickup being driven north by Jonathan M. Bray, 22, Scottsburg.

Elder experienced unspecified bodily pain following the mishap. No indication of assistance by Scott County EMS was listed.

Deputy Rodney Rudder investigated the accident. He estimated property damage at up to \$25,000.

On September 4, an accident at the intersection of Hardy Lake Road and Harrod Road occurred at 5:30 p.m.

According to the driver, Sara E. Lands, 17, Scottsburg, she had been traveling north on Hardy Lake Rd. when she started to turn onto Harrod Rd. at too high of speed. The 202 Ford Focus she was driving ran off the road and into a ditch.

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Lands' passenger, Katie Wampler, 15, Scottsburg, was listed with a possible neck injury. She was aided by Scott County EMS.

Property damage was estimated at up to \$10,000 by Deputy Joe Johnson. He was assisted at the scene by Deputy Joe Guarneri and Reserve Deputy Lonnie Combs.

One person was hurt in a two-vehicle accident on September 6 that occurred at 7 p.m. at the intersection of State Road 3 North and Kinderhook Road.

Driver Jarrod D. Scifres, 23, Scottsburg, was driving a 1997 Ford Ranger west on Kinderhook Rd. and said he had stopped at the stop sign. Scifres said he did not see the 2003 Ford Ranger being operated by Thomas L. Guthrie, 67, Campbellsburg, northbound on S.R. 3. He pulled out and was struck by Guthrie.

Scifres suffered minor facial bleeding and was treated at the scene by Scott County EMS.

Deputy Rex Herald estimated property damage at up to \$25,000. He was assisted at the scene by Deputy Rudder.

This accident was followed by a fatality mishap 500 feet south of the Scottsburg interchange on Interstate 65 around 5:20 p.m. on September 7.

Witnesses' statements indicated that the dead truck driver, James M. Gwinn, 59, Indianapolis, may have been experiencing health problems, possibly a heart attack, at the time of the wreck. Gwinn was driving a semi-tractor-trailer for Transport Connection of Indianapolis.

Deputy Rudder related in his report that the scene revealed no signs of Gwinn having braked or steered off the highway. The southbound rig overturned on the side of the interstate, and Gwinn

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suffered a severe injury to his abdomen and pelvic area because he was partially ejected from the cab. Gwinn died at the scene.

The 1998 Mack tractor had struck several highway signs and a state-owned fence. Total property damage was listed at up to \$50,000 by Deputy Rudder.

The deputy was assisted at the scene by Deputy Mark Shapinsky and Lt. Richey Barton of the Scottsburg City Police Department.

A Scottsburg motorist had a wild ride off State Road 256 on September 8 about 1,500 feet west of State Road 203.

Gregory N. Bentz, 54, Scottsburg, was headed west on S.R. 256 just before 8:26 a.m. when he said he apparently fell asleep. His 2006 Volkswagen veered off the highway's left side, traveling down an embankment and striking a tree and black-topped driveway, which caused the car to overturn and come to a rest back on its tires.

Bentz suffered a possible neck injury during the mishap and was treated by Scott County EMS technicians.

Deputy Shapinsky estimated property damage to total up to \$25,000, including a privately-owned yard and tree.

The final personal injury accident investigated by the Sheriff's Department during the streak occurred on Saturday, September 11, at the T intersection of State Road 56 East and State Road 3 South east of Scottsburg.

Just before 9:30 a.m., Donald Gay, 45, Scottsburg, was hauling a burned truck on a car dolly with his 1993 Chevy pickup as he headed west on S.R. 56. As a vehicle in front of him began tapping its brakes to slow, Gay told Deputy Johnson that he hit his brakes. At that point, the car

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dolly began to slide. Its actions caused the truck to strike an eastbound 2003 Hyundai driven by Sheirta L. Watson, 36, Jeffersonville..

Neither driver was injured, but two passengers in Watson's car, Daniel Watson, 9, and Ronald Watson, 42, both of Jeffersonville, suffered injuries. The boy was listed with a neck injury while Ronald Watson suffered an abrasion on his head.

Property damage was listed at up to \$10,000 by Deputy Johnson. He was assisted at the scene by Deputy Guarneri.