

Snow and ice on Thursday aid in causing 26 vehicular crashes in county, on I-65

Written by George Browning
Tuesday, 21 January 2014 00:00 -

Snow to the north of Scott County and wet surfaces suddenly icing up on Thursday, January 16, made that date a busy one for local law enforcement and the Indiana State Police.

Sheriff Dan McClain reported that his deputies had covered 21 crashes on county roads just on Thursday. Three more wrecks occurred in Scottsburg. Two others happened on Interstate 65. Of reports submitted by officers with the two local departments, only two people were listed as injured. The Sheriff's Department also investigated accidents on Monday, January 13, and on Monday, January 20, which involved injuries.

In the January 13 mishap, Larry K. Couch, 17, Austin, was driving a 2004 Mercury Mountaineer SUV east on State Road 256 when he struck a 1998 Plymouth Voyager van parked on the east side of S.R. 256 just after 8 p.m. The mini-van had its emergency flashers on, advised its owner, Marilyn J. McIntosh of North Vernon. The vehicle had run out of gas, it was learned.

The impact occurred about 2,500 feet west of Terry Road. The force pushed the mini-van across a ditch and into a farm field. The SUV driven by the teenager landed in the ditch on its side.

Couch's airbag deployed and his seatbelt held him in place. The teen complained of chest pain to rescuers and was treated by Scott County EMS technicians. Also injured were his passenger, Kirk Couch, 16, Scottsburg, who also suffered chest pain, and the occupant of the van, John Stamper III, 44, Underwood. Underwood had a minor head wound.

Deputy Rex Herald estimated property loss of up to \$25,000.

Weather-related traffic problems began on I-65 that Thursday when northbound lanes of the interstate were shut down at the 20 mile marker near Henryville due to a two-vehicle wreck.

Just after 11 a.m. that morning, ISP troopers said a 1996 Dodge Dakota driven by Bryan A. Root, 37, North Vernon, hit a slick spot and lost control of the SUV. He struck a loaded

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tractor-trailer operated by Michael D. Brookshire, 34, Pearisburg, Va. Brookshire was hauling a load of frozen food with the 2014 semi. It landed on its side, pretty much blocking the berm and outside passing lane.

Root was transported by ambulance to University of Louisville Hospital for what was described as non-life threatening injuries. Brookshire was unharmed. Both had been wearing their seatbelts.

Property damage is unknown.

Crews worked non-stop to remove the damaged vehicles and clean up the site, but it wasn't until after 2:30 p.m. that the ISP re-opened one northbound lane. Hundreds of vehicles diverted at Henryville to U.S. Highway 31, jamming that highway in Scott County until just after 5:30 p.m.

Another wreck involving injuries to a Scott County resident occurred at the 45.5 mile marker in Jackson County. That area on the interstate south of Seymour was apparently a popular one for crashes that Thursday starting around 11 a.m. The Seymour area was coated with an inch or so of new snow, which in turn caused slick driving conditions.

Senior ISP Trooper Stephen Wheelles of the Versailles District responded to the call when the accident occurred. He found a 2005 Peterbilt flatbed wrecker had been rear-ended by a 1991 Toyota pickup driven by Austin T. Ahart, 22, Scottsburg. Ahart suffered serious head injuries in the crash and was transported to Schneck MedicalCenter in Seymour. He was later transferred to University Hospital in Louisville.

The driver of the wrecker, Roger J. Popp, 34, Indianapolis, got a thrilling ride down an embankment, where the wrecker struck some small trees. He was, however, not hurt.

This crash and several others on the long length of bridges caused the ISP to shut down southbound lanes for nearly an hour. INDOT crews treated the bridge surfaces when debris was removed. Locally, the 11 a.m. hour was also infamous for wrecks. David L. Mize, 24, Austin, was trying to turn from the southbound lane of U.S. 31 North onto Moonglo Road at 11:15 a.m.

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when his 1999 Pontiac Grand Am began sliding on the road due to ice. It struck a 2004 Suzuki XL-7 operated by Courtney M. Densford, 27, Austin. Densford had been stopped in the eastbound lane of Moonglo Rd. when she was hit.

Neither driver was listed as injured, but a passenger in the Densford car, Barbara S. Holland, 27, Crothersville, suffered pelvic/abdominal pain after the mishap and was transported by Scott County EMS to the local hospital. Property damage was estimated at up to \$5,000.

At 11:47 a.m., two people were hurt when a wreck happened on U.S. 31 South and Radio Tower Road.

The 1998 Ford Expedition SUV driven west by Stephanie D. Napier, 42, New Albany, on Radio Tower Rd. slid on ice at its intersection with U.S. 31, striking a 1995 Honda operated by John D. Carter, 47, Scottsburg.

Carter was bruised and shaken, but his passenger, his father, Marvin "Bud" Carter, 78, suffered bruised ribs and a possible hip/upper leg injury. The elder Carter was transported by ambulance to Scott Memorial Hospital.

The Honda was totaled. Estimated loss of property was up to \$10,000, according to Chief Deputy Don Campbell. He was assisted at the wreck by Sheriff McClain and Detective Rick Barrett.