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## News conference transcript: Sheriff describes accident, scene

Below is the transcript of text from Tuesday's news conference and excerpts from the Q&A that followed.

Ontario County Sheriff Philip Povero ....

Thank you for taking the time to gather together so that we could present this information uniformly and at one juncture so hopefully that the information will get out correctly for the sake especially of families of the deceased. Five recent Fairport High School graduates were killed last evening when the Chevrolet Trail Blazer they were riding in collided head-on with a tractor trailer. Now this happened in front of 6700 Routes 5 & 20 in the town of East Bloomfield which is located west of Route 64 S and East of the Flat Iron Road.

The time of the accident was about 8 minutes past 10 o'clock. And at that time the Chevrolet Trailblazer was eastbound; it was passing another eastbound vehicle. After apparently successfully completing the pass of the eastbound vehicle, the Chevrolet Trailblazer suddenly then reentered the westbound lane of traffic.

It appears at this point that the vehicle may have over-corrected following the pass causing it to reenter the westbound lane of Routes 5 & 20. At that time the Chevrolet Trailblazer had a head-on collision clearly in the westbound lane with a tractor trailer that was operated by David Laverty of Olean, NY. Mr. Laverty is 50 years of age.

But upon impact, both vehicles caught fire. It should be noted that Mr. Laverty immediately exited the cab of the tractor that he was on and made an attempt and went to the Chevy Trailblazer he was not able to get close enough to the vehicle at that point to event attempt to rescue the individuals inside the Trailblazer.

The first emergency responder on the scene was Sgt. Greg Schaeffer(?) who's seated on my right. Sgt. Schaeffer(?) stated that from a great distance he saw the flames and the black smoke. It's estimated from witnesses such as Sgt. Schaeffer(?) that the flames resulting from the collision easily reached 50 feet in height singeing electrical lines and burning through cable television and telephone lines. Those lines are currently being repaired and in the process of being restored to residents in Ontario County.

It's also important to note at this point that the providers that went to the scene including the East Bloomfield, West Bloomfield and Bristol fire departments the police officers seated on my left and right and other officers did a tremendous job in dealing throughout the late hours and early morning hours with this particular tragedy. This was as I'm sure you are all aware was a horrific accident very few that we have seen in our years here at the Ontario County Sheriff's Office.

I can't speak enough of the pride that I have for our police officers and other volunteer providers from the fire and EMS services, who although each one deep in their hearts certainly wished that they were not at this particular type of tragedy, each went on with a professional mission and dedication to investigate and to do what they can to clear the area, to work with the victims of the accident and then to work with the families of the deceased. We can't say enough about the efforts put forth by these individuals.

The accident scene is still being monitored and we're controlling traffic on that section of Routes 5 & 20. The tractor trailer was carrying a large quantity of bulk-type paper material. It was headed for a manufacturing plant in the Buffalo area. The paper is being off-loaded at this point.

The trailer itself will have to be removed as the front portion of that was damaged in the fire. The officers are also working with the utility crews who are splicing cables to restore the phone and the cable television service to that particular area. Again that being said, I would just like to extend from all of us at the Ontario County Office of Sheriff and the County of Ontario, from all the dedicated women and men of this office and from all the dedicated volunteers east and west Bloomfield and Bristol our sincere condolences to the families of five young people who were beginning their lives and our thoughts and prayers are certainly with their family and friends and the entire Fairport community.

Excerpts from the Q&A after the sheriff's remarks ...

The second vehicle were friends of the victims in the first vehicle. They did stop. They were interviewed by the police officers and they all provided very important eye-witness information to this tragedy.

Were they behind the car, in front of the car? : They were behind the Trailblazer ... a second car containing four other Fairport residents who were also on the way to the cottage on Keuka Lake. They were following the Trailblazer. Not the car that was passing.

...

The impact of two vehicles even at 55 mph each is totaling a force of 110 mph collision, this type of force and the rupture of fuel lines that occur in this type of high-speed accidents certainly give rise on occasion to a combustible situation. It is quite clear that the fierceness of this impact caused the various fuel lines to rupture and there was certainly enough evidence at the scene if you look at the point of the impact in the westbound lane where the vehicles were actually dragged and pushed, it's certainly very plausible that not only was there enough fuel but there would have been enough spark to cause ignition.

...

Monroe County Medical examiner will have the final say obviously on any type of blood condition. They will as a routine part of their investigation collect blood and analyze it. So at this point we just do not have any information or the ability to accurately state whether or not there was involvement of that point.

...

At this point, I'd say that based on preliminary investigation we're obviously still doing the accident reconstruction. It's not possible at this time to accurately state the type of speeds we might be seeing. So we would be speculating at this point. But again there was a passing maneuver going on. A car leaving one lane, entering another and then apparently over-correcting. So there was obviously enough speed to pass and we're still trying to accurately determine what those speeds were.

Sheriff, you mentioned that the truck driver was headed to the Buffalo area with a rig full of paper materials. Where was he coming from? He was coming from Springfield, Mass., as I recall. He had left the Thruway at one of the exits in Ontario County driven to 5 & 20, and was continuing on 5 & 20 to Buffalo to deliver the load.

Why did he not stay on the Thruway? He got off the Thruway to rest and after he did so he continued west.

Have you been able to talk to the driver and, if so, what has he been able... The driver has been very cooperative and we have been able to talk to him. He's obviously devastated by this as well. He has given his complete account and what we believe is as accurate as possible to the officers and investigators and has indicated his willingness to continue to cooperate if it's necessary.

Did he call 911? Who called 911? I don't know. I think it was a passing motorist. We received numerous 911 calls, one of which was from occupants of the vehicle they were following. The driver of the truck was able to just get himself out.

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At this time I think we categorize it as a terrible tragedy. The investigation indicates that the pass was done legally and may have been an over-correcting maneuver on the part of the driver.

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