



the star.com Dead driver hailed as hero

Two drivers charged with dangerous driving after crash kills transport truck driver

Hundreds caught in backups, OPP now estimates the highway will be closed until midnight

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A truck driver hailed as a hero is dead, two people have been charged with dangerous driving and hundreds of motorists are stranded on Highway 400 after a tractor-trailer that swerved to avoid speeding cars crashed into a guardrail and went into a ditch near Bradford today.



RON BULL/TORONTO STAR

A truck driver was killed today and traffic was backed up for miles in both directions on Highway 400 between Highways 88 and 89 after several speeding cars caused the truck to go out of control and crash. Two people have been charged with dangerous driving resulting in death.

The accident happened on the same stretch of highway as one on Saturday night in which two people were charged with dangerous driving and 11 people were sent to hospital.

In today's ominously similar accident, an empty tanker truck was reportedly heading northbound between Highways 88 and 89 at 11:30 a.m. when it swerved to avoid two or three cars that were travelling at high speeds and weaving in and out of traffic, OPP Sgt. Cam Woolley said.

After wiping out an estimated 25 metres of the median guardrail, the truck veered right before it jack-knifed and rolled into a ditch on the side of the highway, leaking highly flammable diesel fuel across both the north and southbound lanes of the highway.

Although an air ambulance was called to take the man to hospital, he died before he could be transported.

In his death, however, the driver is being hailed as a hero by witnesses who said his actions helped to save the lives of countless others.

By swerving back to his right after crashing into the middle divider, the driver prevented his cab from crashing through that same divider and slamming into oncoming traffic head-on.

Tina Hannahson, 37, who was driving northbound on the 400 with her 21-year-old niece, said she saw three cars race past her in the right lane and then cut across to the left lane just moments after she let the

A Tale of Two Crashes

Saturday Crash:

Eleven people were sent to hospital after a 26-year-old man lost control of his speeding Honda Civic as he was weaving through the southbound lanes around 6:30 p.m.

His vehicle rolled over, then crashed into another speeding car, a Volkswagen Golf being driven by a 22-year-old woman.

Two other vehicles swerved out of the way of the collision, then crashed into the metal median,

tanker merge into the centre lane in front of her.

"I got cut off by a Mustang," Hannahson said. "He went into the left lane and then he came around in front of the truck and cut the truck off."

She said the tractor-trailer driver tried to sacrifice his truck to avoid involving other vehicles.

"He's a hero," Hannahson said. "He killed himself to save others."

Jane Lennox, 40, of Barrie, who was driving on the southbound lanes of the 400 with her teenage daughter Laura to visit her mother in Toronto, said she was amazed by what the truck driver did.

The pair were about 150 feet away from the truck as it slammed into the guard rail in front of them.

"I think he's a hero," she said. "If he hadn't corrected himself, he would have hit us head on and we would have been dead," said Lennox.

"I don't know if he saw us, but he corrected himself," she added. "We were like two ships passing in the dark . . . I'm thankful to God that he spared us and I'm thankful to the gentleman for correcting the truck and I'm deeply saddened he lost his life."

The drivers of two other vehicles involved in the crash were arrested at the scene and now face charges of dangerous driving resulting in death, Woolley said.

"We have two men under arrest and we want to talk to a third," he said, noting that the wanted man was the driver of a third car seen speeding past the truck just before the accident.

"We certainly had grounds to arrest the two parties for dangerous driving."

"We have most of the licence number of the third vehicle but we're not releasing that yet," Woolley said later in the day, adding: "It may or may not be involved in the accident."

As a result of the crash, the highway will be closed between Highway 88 and 89 until at least midnight tonight, OPP said.

Hours after the fatal collision, a man was airlifted to hospital with stab wounds from a possible road rage incident nearby.

South Simcoe police found a man suffering stab wounds around 3:30 p.m. in a car on Canal Rd., west of Highway 400 in the town of Bradford West Gwillimbury.

He was taken to Sunnybrook hospital.

Police have one person of interest in custody.

In the Saturday night pileup that injured the 11 people, the drivers of the first two cars involved in the crash were charged, as excessive speeding is believed to be a determining factor in the crash, which closed the highway for 14 hours from 6:30 p.m. Saturday until late Sunday morning.

splintering the divider and sending debris into the northbound lanes.

The drivers of both the Civic and Golf were charged with criminal negligence causing bodily harm and dangerous driving causing bodily harm.

The Crash Today

Three speeding cars including a black Ford Mustang and a green Pontiac cut in front of an empty tanker truck, causing the truck to swerve into the centre median guardrail.

After colliding with the guardrail, the tanker swerved back to the right and rolled down into a ditch on the right-hand side of the road, landing on its side.

The driver died of his injuries.

Just north of where the tanker came to rest, the Pontiac and another car also crashed into the guardrail.

The drivers of both the Mustang and the Pontiac have been charged with dangerous driving resulting in death and a third person is sought for questioning.

Meanwhile, several people caught in the procession of stalled cars behind today's accident jumped out of their vehicles to help put out a vehicle fire in the northbound lanes near the 11th Concession.

No one was injured in the fire, police said.

with file from Tamsyn Burgmann