

Crash closes down Highway 20

Contributed by Elizabeth Larson
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UKIAH – A crash along Highway 20 near Ukiah that closed down the highway on Thursday afternoon left one man with major injuries and two others – one a Lake County resident – uninjured.

A report from the Ukiah California Highway Patrol office explained that the crash occurred at 4:19 p.m. on Highway 20 east of Road A.

Jeremy Jeffers, 20, of Talmage reportedly fell asleep at the wheel of his Ford, allowing the vehicle to drift off of the roadway, the CHP reported.

Jeffers woke up, attempted to correct his vehicle's course, which the CHP said caused the vehicle to veer out of control and into the opposing traffic lane, where it collided with a 1988 Mazda 323 driven by Vernon Ward, 69, of Round Valley.

Ward was not wearing his seat belt and was immediately ejected through the driver's door, which was torn open in the collision, according to the CHP.

While Ward was left lying in the westbound traffic lane, his car continued on to become involved in a secondary collision with a 2003 Chevy Tracker driven by 53-year-old Marilyn Saderlund of Kelseyville, the CHP reported.

Meanwhile, Jeffers' vehicle continued out of control and collided with an embankment bordering the roadway's south side, where it came to rest.

CHP began receiving 911 calls from cell phones around 4:20 p.m. regarding the collision, according to the CHP report.

CHP Sgt. Bill Holcomb arrived at the scene first, and found Ward lying in the roadway, “bleeding significantly,” according to the CHP report.

Holcomb began providing emergency medical care to Ward, the report stated. He was soon joined by additional CHP officers and Mendocino County Sheriff's deputies, who helped manage the collision scene, and emergency medical personnel from the Redwood Valley Fire Department.

Ward was airlifted by CalStar Air Ambulance to Santa Rosa Memorial Hospital where he was treated for major injuries, including blunt force trauma he sustained to his head and upper torso.

The accident closed down traffic in both directions for at least 30 minutes, according to Lake County News correspondent Terre Logsdon, who was traveling through the area. She said the accident, which happened near Lake Mendocino, backed up traffic nearly to Highway 101 one way and past the bridge that crosses part of the lake in the other direction.

Jeffers and Saderlund both escaped uninjured, the CHP reported. Both of them were wearing their seat belts.

CHP Officer Terry Munoz is leading the continuing investigation into the collision's cause.

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