

Driver flips big rig, arrested for DUI

Contributed by Elizabeth Larson

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THE DRIVER'S AGE HAS BEEN CORRECTED BASED ON HIS BOOKING SHEET.

PARADISE COVE – California Highway Patrol officers arrested a Humboldt County truck driver for allegedly driving drunk Wednesday night after he flipped a semi truck carrying a load of frozen crab.

Mark Johnson, 50, of McKinleyville was taken into custody following the crash along Highway 20 just west of Paradise Cove, said CHP Officer Rob Hearn, the investigator at the scene.

Hearn said Johnson was under the influence of alcohol while driving the big rig and trailer, which went off the road and down a short embankment.

The crash was reported to the CHP Dispatch center at about 9:40 p.m., according to CHP incident logs.

While driving eastbound, Johnson flipped the truck while emerging from a sharp curve in the road. “Due to his intoxication he entered the curve too fast,” said Hearn.

That caused Johnson to lose control of the truck, with investigators suggesting that the trailer may have flipped first, taking the cab with it. Johnson reportedly received only minor injuries.

The truck's trailer was filled with frozen Dungeness crabs, said Hearn. The crabs were contained in the trailer, with no signs of any seafood on the roadway.

Less than a gallon of diesel fuel was spilled, with emergency personnel managing to contain the rest of the fuel, said Hearn. There were no environmental concerns as a result, he added.

CHP was assisted at the scene by an engine and crew from Northshore Fire Protection District and another engine from Cal Fire's Clearlake Oaks station.

A semi tow truck arrived at the scene shortly before 11 p.m. to begin the job of removing the truck's wreckage.

CHP managed to keep the road open, using flares and traffic control to guide vehicles past the crash, which officials said was a crime scene.

CHP reported at 11:44 p.m. that the trucking company could not get to the scene for cleanup for at least five hours, and that they planned to dispose of all the cargo.

Officials decided that the five-hour wait was not sufficient, so a Cal Fire inmate crew was called to clean up, arriving after 1 a.m. The trucking company will be billed for removing the truck and cargo from the scene.

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