



INDEPENDENCE TWP.

Ice cream truck rolls over, pins driver for 20 minutes

By **STEPHEN FRYE** Of The Oakland Press

A 44-year-old Clarkston woman was seriously injured late Thursday morning after the ice cream truck she was driving rolled over, apparently after blowing a tire, and pinned her underneath for more than 20 minutes. The woman, who was not wearing a seat belt, was driving the Daisy Ice Cream truck northeast on White Lake Road, about a quarter-mile southwest of Dixie Highway.

"We do have a witness, and the evidence verifies she had a blowout on her left rear wheel," said Oakland County Sheriff's Deputy Thomas Poulin, one of three accident investigators at the scene taking measurements and evaluating the road and truck.

The woman, who was not immediately identified, was taken to Genesys Health Park in Grand Blanc for treatment of injuries, which were not specified. Sheriff's officials said she was in stable condition.

The accident closed White Lake Road for about three hours in the early afternoon, as the ice cream truck came to rest on a curb on the east side of the road, with a couple of dozen individually wrapped ice creams melting in the hot sunshine.

The accident occurred right at the intersection of Mustang and White Lake Road, in front of the entrance to the Timberline Estates subdivision. The accident was reported at 11:43 a.m., and firefighters from the Independence Fire Department arrived at 11:47 a.m. The woman was removed from underneath the ice cream truck by 12:10 p.m., said Fire Capt. Tom McDonald.

"She was pinned underneath the truck," McDonald said. "She spoke with us the whole time. She was very calm. We assigned one person to her care and he stayed with her and talked to her the whole time."

McDonald said the firefighter talking to her received information about her injuries and how she felt, while explaining to her what was being done in the background.

"We don't want to re-create the terror she felt," McDonald said, so the goal was to tell her when the truck would be lifted and explain any loud noises.

The victim's sister was called, and the sister arrived and was able to talk to her.

"One of the biggest components is the person here," McDonald said. "Not just bandaging their wounds, but caring for the emotional needs of them and their family."

Pneumatic bags, which expand like a life raft, and hydraulic cylinders were used to lift the ice cream truck off the woman.

Lt. Tim Atkins of the Oakland County Sheriff's Office said the woman was lucky the ice cream truck landed on the curb, giving her a little room.

"The whole weight of the vehicle wasn't on her," Atkins said. "The fire department did an excellent job here. They got her out quickly."

Though the vehicle involved may have been unusual for investigation of a major crash, Poulin said it presented nothing different from other similarsized trucks, "only this one has ice cream in it."

"I have to admit it's my first ice cream truck," said Poulin, a 23-year veteran.

He said it appeared the truck went into a yaw — swerving or sliding — after the blowout and rolled over. And while having a left rear tire blow out normally would cause a vehicle to go to the left, she swerved to the right, likely in reaction to the blowout, Poulin said.

"She may have steered into the situation," Poulin said.

Poulin said investigators also will be looking at the tires.

"The tires definitely would not pass an inspection," Poulin said.

A phone number for the company listed on the side of the truck was disconnected.

Neighbors reported hearing the noise but not seeing the accident. Catherine Hubbard, who was visiting her son's home, said she saw the woman on a stretcher, with her head bandaged and receiving intravenous fluids.

"I hope she's OK," Hubbard said, watching the investigation with her 7-year-old grandson.

Another neighbor, a 64-year-old retired carpenter who asked not to be named, said the road has a lot of traffic and many trucks. When he heard the noise, he first thought it was a gravel hauler.

"That's all I thought it was," he said. "It's a terrible road — too much traffic, too narrow. The traffic is too heavy on it. But that's life today. That's just the way it is."

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The Oakland Press/DOUG BAUMAN Oakland officials were on the scene where an ice cream truck rolled over on the corner of White Lake and Mustang roads.