

‘ALMOST MIRACLE’ NO ONE HURT: Truck slams into financial planner/law office building

by Dan Brannan, Content Director
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ALTON - A man driving a truck apparently backed with force into the financial planning office of **Jeff Hicks** and law office of **Joseph E. Hoefert** and staff in Upper Alton on Thursday afternoon.

The incident occurred in the 4 p.m. range on Thursday at 1600 Washington Ave. in Alton.

The driver of the pickup truck also appeared to strike another vehicle, which was damaged at the scene. Both vehicles were resting in the roadway after the accident.

Gina Moore, one of the office staff in the building, said the sound was shocking to say the least.

“All of sudden we heard a loud screeching noise,” she said. “It sounded like a vehicle had issues out here and there was a ‘bam.’ He started backing up from O’Reilly’s parking lot and backed up with the wheels squealing as loud as they could. He flew out into the intersection and hit that sign and flew backwards in the building.”

Moore pointed out a man lying down near the wrecked vehicle as hanging from the passenger side of the car before this happened.

“I don’t know if they were having issues or what,” she said.

Tammy Kiel was another one of the office personnel present when the incident happened.

“At first I thought it was someone having vehicle issues and I heard the ‘bang’ and I thought ‘oh God,’ something just hit our building,” she said. “I could feel the impact and the first thing I thought of was Jeff. I knew it had to be near his office. I ran to see if he was OK and he was.”

Hicks' back chair faces the position where the truck struck and entered the building.

Hicks was as cool as could be despite what had just happened. He said he didn't have time to be scared or contemplate what happened because everything occurred so quickly.

“I was in the chair,” he said. “It didn't scare me. It hit the building and I just sat there to see what would fall down on me and nothing did. I turned around to see what was going on and the guy removed his truck and got out of here back to the roadway. “

Hicks, the owner of the building and Financial Planning, said the shelving units right behind him were taken out when the car crashed near him.

“It was like four feet to my desk,” he said. “I couldn't move. I had to get my feet out. I had a lot of bricks around me so I had to crawl out over the desk. I know it sounds like a big deal, but I didn't think too much about it. It was a quite unique incident, though.”

Alton Fire Chief Bernie Sebold and staff were there to tend to the people involved in the accident and the structure itself to make sure it was safe.

“We wanted to make sure the building was structurally stable because several of the studs that hold up that brick veneer are now gone,” he said. “We put up one of our Paratech Struts to stabilize the structure until they get a construction company in here to stabilize what is left of the front of the building. We use the Paratech Struts for trench, structural collapse and vehicle stabilization so they have many uses. The only thing we worried about now is to make sure the brick veneer doesn't fall down and hurt someone.”

Sebold said it is literally “a miracle” that Hicks was OK after the truck crashed into the building.

“He was sitting at his desk when the vehicle went into the building,” Sebold said of Hicks. “We are very fortunate it wasn't a foot to the left or right. There could have been more of a chance for injury.”



