

Pickup driver is dead, officer is seriously injured in head-on morning crash

by Dan Brannan, Content Director
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SOUTH ROXANA - A driver of a pickup truck collided head-on with a Pontoon Beach patrol car while passing on Illinois State Route 111 Thursday morning and was pronounced dead at the scene. The Pontoon Beach officer was airlifted from the crash site in serious condition and had to be cut out of the vehicle.

Illinois State Patrol Officer Calvin "Buddy" Dye said the driver of the pickup truck was southbound on Illinois Route 111. The vehicles were near the J.F. Electric building when, according to a witness, the driver tried to pass her and for unknown reasons struck the Pontoon Beach Police car head on.

"The driver in the pickup was pronounced dead at the scene and the police officer was transported to a St. Louis area hospital and is currently in serious condition," Dye said. "The police officer was talking at the scene so at this time we are going to consider him to be in serious condition. The man is a patrol officer for Pontoon Beach and also served five years previously for the Roxana Police. He has been with Pontoon Beach for one year and is from Bethalto."

Dye continued: "The driver of the pickup passed a witness first and according to her she was directly behind him when he swerved into northbound lanes. We are still investigating why he did what he did, there wasn't an animal that jumped in front of him. We recovered a cell phone from the pickup truck's vehicle and are still investigating why. The Pontoon Beach officer was on routine day shift patrol.

"It was definitely a very bad crash. Right now it is too early to know the speeds of either vehicle, but that impact was definitely bad looking at both vehicles. The driver killed was from Bethalto, around 33 years of age and a male. The police officer resides in Bethalto and is around 44 to 45 years of age. Both vehicles had one occupant.

"It will take a while to figure out cause of crash. It was a regular pickup truck. The pickup truck was fully engulfed and we don't have make and model at this time. Both vehicles did catch fire. The police officer had to be cut out of the vehicle, but he was able to communicate with other officers."

Trooper Dye was uncertain how long Illinois State 111 would be closed in that area.

"It will at least be a couple more hours, we don't rush with things like this," he said. "We have investigators here and several witnesses to speak with. There are multiple witnesses we have to sit down and talk with. It is too early to know why he swerved into the northbound lane of traffic, as the pickup truck was southbound."

