

Officers narrowly avoid serious injury

Written by News Desk

Monday, 06 January 2014 17:21 -



One of the Millbrook Police patrol cars damaged during the incident on December 31, 2013.

Photo: Sarah Morrison Stephens

By SARAH MORRISON STEPHENS

A Millbrook man has been arrested by Alabama State Troopers following a New Year's Eve crash that seriously damaged two Millbrook patrol units who were stopped on Main Street on a separate traffic stop.

Subsequent to the investigation the driver of the pick-up truck, 39 year old white male Patrick B. Wiggins of Millbrook, was arrested by State Troopers for DUI.

On Tuesday, December 31, 2013, at approximately 10:48 p.m., Millbrook police officers responded to a citizen complaint with regard to a pick-up truck driving recklessly, southbound on Main Street. Shortly after receiving the complaint, patrol officers observed a vehicle matching the description driving southbound in the 3000 block of Main Street. As the patrol units moved into position to monitor the vehicle for violations, the pick-up truck approached two police units

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that were conducting a traffic stop in the 2800 block of Main Street.

Both units were stationary, parked between the far right southbound traffic lane and the right of way, behind a vehicle stopped for a traffic violation. As the pick-up truck approached the police units conducting the traffic investigation, the truck suddenly veered to the right, striking the first patrol vehicle in its rear bumper, continuing down the driver side of the first vehicle, then striking the second police unit in its rear bumper and driver side rear quarter panel before coming to rest. At the time of the collision, both officers were outside their vehicle between the violator's vehicle and the police unit. The vehicle stopped for the original violation was occupied at the time of the collision.

Once the pick-up truck came to rest, the driver was taken into custody and detained under investigation for possible Driving Under the Influence charges. Millbrook paramedics responded to the scene to check on the driver of the pick-up truck and the officers on scene. The driver had no visible injuries.

Corporal Eric Headley, who was standing closest to the point of impact at the time of the collision was evaluated by medics after experiencing pain to his lower back. Corporal Headley was later transported to Prattville Baptist Emergency Room for additional evaluation and treatment. He was treated and released from the emergency room without being admitted.

Due to police vehicles being involved in the traffic collision, the Alabama Department of Public Safety was requested to respond to the scene to investigate the collision. State Troopers did respond and completed an Alabama Uniform Traffic Crash Report. There were no other injuries as a result of the collision. The offender's vehicle, a 2006 Chevrolet Silverado pick-up truck and the two police vehicles sustained major damage as a result of the collision.

"We are extremely thankful and blessed that no one was seriously injured or killed," Millbrook Police Chief P.K. Johnson said. "I was at the scene with-in moments of the collision and I have reviewed video footage of the collision taken from one of police unit's dash cameras. We very well could have lost one or two police officers, as well as the citizens that were stopped for a traffic violation. I firmly believe the Lord was not ready for any of them. "

Johnson said several factors kept serious injuries from happening. "Had there not been two

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patrol vehicles out at the scene; had an alert police officer not realized what was happening and took quick decisive action to alert the officers in harm's way what was coming; we could have had an entirely different outcome," Johnson said. "Corporal A.B. Wadsworth was pulling behind the violator when he realized that his vehicle had veered right towards the two patrol units and the officer, who were exposed. Wadsworth, realizing collision was eminent, blasted his siren, giving the officers seconds to take evasive action. You know, our officers were out in force that evening to prevent just this type of thing from happening. This just goes to show you that even law enforcement is not immune from becoming victims. I hate that we most probably lost two police vehicles, but we can replace them. We are extremely thankful that no one was seriously injured or killed."