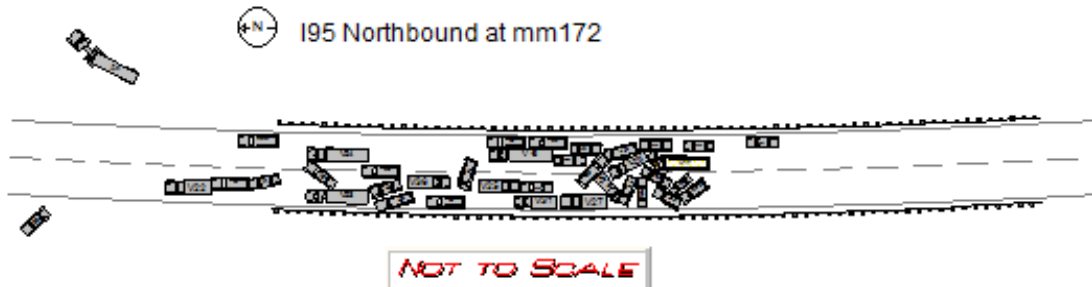


MAINE STATE POLICE TROOP E



MEDIA RELEASE

The following is a summary of findings and conclusions made by Maine State Police investigators in relation to the multi-vehicle pileup and subsequent accidents that occurred on I-95 northbound in Carmel on 02/25/15. This release is very detailed however it is not intended to be a complete report of the incident but rather a compilation and synopsis of the information collected through the investigative process. Tr. Bonnevie, Tr. Snow and Tr. Morrell have spent numerous hours conducting follow-up interviews, reviewing photographs and videos as well as vehicle and scene evidence in order to develop fact based conclusions as to the causation and contributing factors.



Primary accident investigators:

Tr. Tucker Bonnevie, Tr. Trevor Snow, Tr. Stephen Morrell

Report prepared by:

Lt. Sean Hashey 03/11/15

Date/Times

February 25, 2015 Wednesday

7:32 a.m. 1st Call into 9-1-1

7:37 a.m. 1st trooper on scene, Interstate is shut down.

Location

Main crash mile marker 172 Northbound Carmel

Overall- 168 to 172 approximately 4 miles

Weather Conditions

Moderate to heavy snowfall, reduced visibility

Temperature approximately 15 degrees

Road Conditions

Snow-covered and slippery

VSS (reduced speed) signs indicating 45 mph were activated at approximately 5:00 a.m.

Initial accidents located on a long right hand sweeping downgrade, channeled between right and left hand guardrails at mm 172.

Crash statistics overall

31 Total reportable crashes. (Several crashes involved multiple vehicles)

102 Total vehicles involved in reportable crashes.

40 Estimated vehicles involved in non-reportable incidents (slid off roadway, minimal/no damage)

149 Total occupants.

32 Total reports of injury.

Crash statistics at primary scene Mile marker 172

39 Total vehicles involved in reportable crashes.

1 School Bus

2 Tractor Trailers

1 Flatbed Wrecker

1 Single Unit Commercial Truck

34 Passenger Vehicles

50 Total occupants.

26 Total reports of injury.

Seatbelt statistics

149 Total occupants

1 Seatbelt not worn (required)

148 Were either wearing a seatbelt, in a safety seat or were legally exempt (bus)

139 Lap/Shoulder belts used

6 Child restraint used

3 Seatbelt not worn (Not required-bus)

Injury

All injuries sustained were non-life threatening.

- 17 Total transported by ambulance
 - 11 Eastern Maine Medical Center
 - 6 St. Joseph's Hospital

- 4 Total walk in to medical facility
 - 2 Eastern Maine Medical Center Emergency Room
 - 1 Eastern Maine Medical Center Walk-In Care
 - 1 Sebasticook Valley Hospital

- 19 Total treated on-scene and released

Law Enforcement / Fire / EMS Response

- 91 Total responders
 - 29 Law Enforcement
 - 19 State Police
 - 7 Penobscot County Sheriff's Office
 - 1 Warden Service
 - 1 Forestry
 - 1 Municipal

 - 28 Fire (*est.)
 - 7 Carmel
 - 5 Etna
 - 5 Bangor
 - 5 Hermon
 - 3 Newburgh
 - 3 Brewer

 - 34 EMS (*est.)
 - 17 Ambulances dispatched
 - 34 EMS Personnel
 - 12 Capitol
 - 8 Hermon
 - 4 G&H
 - 4 Sabasticook
 - 2 Mayo
 - 2 Orrington
 - 2 Hampden

Interstate shutdown / Clearance

- 7:34 a.m. Interstate closed due to accident.
- 11:50 a.m. Single lane opened.
- 12:23 a.m. Interstate re-opened, Roadblock at Etna/Dixmont Exit 167 removed.

Causations and Contributing factors

Obstruction in roadway (Vehicle involved in previous crash)

Driving too fast for conditions

Following too closely

Roadway conditions (surface condition, downgrade curve, guardrail containment)

Weather conditions (limited visibility/heavy snowfall)

Traffic volume (high commuter traffic)

Summary of Event

On Wednesday February 25, 2015 at 7:32 a.m., the DPS Bangor RCC received the first call of an accident on I-95 northbound near mile-marker 172 in Carmel. The caller reported that the driver of the vehicle in which the caller was a passenger, had swerved to avoid a vehicle that was stopped in the right hand lane. The caller's vehicle was subsequently struck by another vehicle during that evasive maneuver. The two vehicles involved in that event pulled to the breakdown lane so that police could be called.

The caller then reported witnessing additional accidents to include a tractor and trailer log truck that went off of the roadway while the caller was still on the phone with a dispatcher.

At 7:34 a.m., a second call was received by a second dispatcher. It was from the passenger of another motor vehicle. The caller was also reporting an evasive maneuver by the driver of the vehicle in which the caller was a passenger. The driver had lost control while avoiding a vehicle that was stopped on the highway. The caller also reported seeing a tractor and trailer log truck leave the highway and additional cars going off of the roadway during the course of speaking with the dispatcher.

The DPS Bangor RCC as well as the Penobscot Regional Communications Center continued to receive a number of 9-1-1 calls reporting various accidents in that same location. Over the course of the next minutes, law enforcement, fire and EMS were dispatched and arrived on scene to find a multiple vehicle pileup. The pileup involved passenger cars, tractor trailer trucks and a school bus with passengers. There were multiple victims requiring extrication due to entrapment.

First responders' initial efforts were to triage the scene. The scene was particularly challenging not only due to the amount of vehicles and victims but also due to the lack of space as the majority of the vehicles were tightly packed together and substantially damaged. The vehicles were in such close proximity that the responders navigated through the scene at times by walking over the tops of vehicles.

Several vehicles had to be pulled apart in order for responders to reach the victims. A State Police SUV cruiser was utilized along with a chain borrowed from a crash victim to pull some of the vehicles apart. First responder teams were formed to extricate and treat the people most seriously injured, many of the victims had to be physically lifted out and over the mangled vehicles. Heavy snowfall made conditions very slippery.

Dozens of additional crashes, some involving multiple vehicles, occurred as a result of the initial blockage. Members of the Penobscot County Sheriff's Office provided substantial assistance with the majority of secondary crashes that occurred as a result of the primary crash. Five patrol deputies as well as the Sheriff and Chief Deputy responded and investigated 15 crashes involving a total of 34 vehicles.

A determination was made to close the northbound lane at Exit 167, Etna/Dixmont. Traffic that was stopped and contained between mile marker 167 and the primary crash scene was rerouted through the crossover at mile marker 171 and then into the southbound passing lane.

Tow trucks from five local wrecker services began separating and removing vehicles after EMS had completed treatment and transport of injured victims. The passing lane was initially opened to aid in removal of damaged vehicles and to allow traffic waiting immediately behind the crash scene to continue north. The travel lane was used as an area to stage damaged vehicles for later removal from the scene. DOT plow trucks were able to clear lanes of snow and an enormous amount of debris.

Investigation began almost immediately with scene documentation that included photos and video. Cooperation between tow companies allowed investigators to have vehicles removed to a single staging area for further examination. Additional photos of individual vehicles were taken at the vehicle staging area to aid investigators with documentation of damage and to determine ownership.

Troopers were assigned to determine causation and accurately document the primary crash scene. Operators and occupants of each involved vehicle were contacted and interviewed. Reports from all additional crashes were collected and evaluated.

Determinations and Conclusions

The first confirmed event involved an SUV that was traveling northbound when the driver lost control on the slippery roadway. The vehicle spun 360 degrees and struck the right hand guardrail which caused minor, non-reportable damage to the driver's side rear of the SUV. The SUV came to rest in the travel lane.

While the SUV was spinning, a line of three vehicles were approaching. The first vehicle moved into the passing lane and avoided the SUV. The second vehicle quickly moved into the passing lane to avoid the SUV and clipped the front of the third vehicle that was already in the passing lane. The operators of those two vehicles were able to safely pull to the breakdown lane and make the first 9-1-1 call to police.

The driver of a small sedan also came upon the SUV that was now stopped in the travel lane and attempted to move around it in the passing lane. The sedan driver lost control and left the roadway. The vehicle came to rest partially in the median and partially in the travel lane. The vehicle sustained minor damage from striking a snowbank.

The driver of an unloaded tractor and trailer log truck began to jackknife as he attempted to move around the SUV. The driver of the log truck purposely drove off of the roadway to avoid striking the SUV. The truck came to rest in the ditch on the right side of the highway and was undamaged.

A pickup truck driver also saw the SUV in the travel lane and attempted to move into the passing lane. The truck driver became involved in a three vehicle crash. The pickup truck driver reported hearing additional crashes behind him as he got out of his vehicle to assess damage and confer with the other operators.

The primary blockage and pileup at mile marker 172 are a result of the additional crashes.

Investigators have determined that the entire multi-vehicle crash was caused by a combination of factors and simultaneous events to include: the initial single motor vehicle crash, operators driving too fast for conditions, operators following too closely, road conditions, weather conditions and poor visibility. Additional factors include the downgrade of the roadway, long-sweeping right hand curve and the channeling effect of the guardrails present on both sides of the roadway. It should be noted that not every vehicle involved in this incident had driver's actions that attributed to the event; several vehicles were able to safely avoid the collisions in front of them only to be struck from behind.

Criminal charges are not anticipated in relation to this event.

INCIDENT RESPONSE

There were numerous people and agencies that responded to assist with this incident. The response included many motorists who were stopped in traffic at the scene. Motorists provided blankets, cell phones and warm vehicles for several of those that were involved in accidents. RSU 19 provided a warming bus off site for people to gather while they waited for family or friends to arrive.

Fire and EMS personnel, Law Enforcement, Regional Communications Centers, Wrecker Companies, Hospitals and Maine DOT worked extremely well together to rescue the injured, stabilize the scene, reroute traffic, conduct preliminary investigation and eventually return the interstate to full operation in less than 5 hours. It is remarkable how quickly and efficiently this took place given the magnitude of the scene, amount of vehicular damage, limited access to the scene and weather conditions. Individual efforts, teamwork, training, preparedness and positive attitudes were key factors to the overall scene management and investigation.