

La Pine Man Third to Die from late October Highway 58 Crash

by Cheryl McDermott

Oregon State Police troopers announced that a La Pine man died Thursday, November 16, from injuries sustained in the late October two-vehicle crash on Highway 58 which occurred about three miles west of Willamette Pass. Two others died, including a La Pine man and a Cottage Grove woman, and another man was seriously injured in the crash.

Kenneth Dean Babcock, 49, reportedly succumbed to his injuries Thursday at St. Charles Medical Center in Bend where he was being treated since the crash.

The accident occurred about 10 a.m. October 30 when a 2003 Chevrolet pickup towing a camp trailer was heading uphill (east) on Highway 58 near milepost 58 and crossed the centerline into the westbound lanes of the four-lane highway. The pickup was hit on the passenger-side by a 1997 Dodge utility truck registered to Midstate Electric Coop, Inc. of La Pine.

The pickup's driver and sole occupant, Laverne Ellen Wheeler, 58, of Cottage Grove died at the scene. Babcock was the driver of the utility truck.

The utility truck's right front passenger, James L. Lester, a 34-year old La Pine man, was pronounced deceased at the scene.

The center front passenger, 48-year old Patrick Harry Barker, also of La Pine, was seriously injured and transported by Oakridge Ambulance to Sacred Heart Hospital.

While road conditions were reportedly icy, the cause of the crash remains under investigation by Oregon State Police troopers from the Oakridge and Springfield offices.

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