Bend Woman Cited in Thursdayâ€™s Hwy. 97 Crash, caused 5-hour road closure

by Richard Burton

A 74-year old Bend woman was cited for careless driving following an investigation into Thursday's three-vehicle non-injury crash on Highway 97 north of Klamath Falls. One of the vehicles, a commercial tanker truck towing a gasoline tanker, overturned, resulting in a nearly five-hour closure of the highway. About 2 p.m. on Dec. 28, an Oregon State Police (OSP) trooper was assisting a disabled motorist on Highway 97 near milepost 231, and had the overhead lights of his patrol car activated to warn other motorists traveling north.

A Bend woman was cited for careless driving in Thursday's three-vehicle crash on Hwy. 97 near milepost 231. OSP Photo.A line of vehicles passing the trooper began to slow down, and a 2004 GMC sport utility vehicle (SUV) driven by Louise Bell, 74, of Bend, lost control as she tried to slow too quickly for the icy conditions.

Bellâ€™s SUV fishtailed, got traction on the wet pavement and crossed into the oncoming lane of traffic where she collided nearly head-on with a 2004 Freightliner tanker truck towing a gasoline tanker trailer. The Freightliner is registered to Home Run Transport, Inc., and was driven by Robert C. Bailey, 46, of Klamath Falls

After impact, the tanker truck and trailer crossed the northbound lane, hit snow on the side of the road, and rolled onto its passenger side. The trailer remained upright.

A third vehicle, a northbound 2005 Toyota SUV driven by 72-year old Harold Husby of Sunriver, attempted to avoid the crash, went around the truck and hit the back of Bellâ€™s GMC.

All three drivers were wearing safety restraints and were uninjured, according to a news release issued by OSP.

Oregon State Police troopers from the Klamath Falls Area Command office are completing the investigation. Oregon Department of Transportation and local emergency responders assisted at the scene. The highway was completely reopened around 7 p.m.

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