

St. Helens woman dies in head-on crash with semi-truck

by Cheryl McDermott

A St. Helens woman whose driving privileges were suspended died Tuesday afternoon when her van crossed the centerline of Highway 30 near Deer Island and crashed head-on into a commercial truck and trailer. Minutes before the accident, motorists in the area called police dispatch to report the van being driven erratically, authorities said.

Barbara A. Smith of St. Helens was killed in a head-on collision on Highway 30 Tuesday afternoon. Her Chevy Astro van (top & bottom photos) crossed the centerline and collided with a semi-truck and trailer (center photo). Photos provided by OSP. Barbara A. Smith, 50, of St. Helens was eastbound on Highway 30 near milepost 35 when the accident occurred around 3:35 p.m. February 20, Oregon State Police (OSP) reported. She was pronounced deceased at the scene.

Investigation revealed that Smith's 1989 Chevrolet Astro crossed the centerline and struck a truck towing an empty chip trailer. The truck's driver, identified as Guy D. Burback, 50, of Rainier, tried to avoid the collision by moving to the right shoulder against the guardrail, but the vehicles crashed head-on.

After impact the truck came to rest in the westbound lane, while the van was partially in a ditch on the eastbound shoulder, troopers said.

Smith is believed to have been wearing safety restraints, but was ejected from the van. Burback, driving for Lemmon Trucking of Longview, Washington, was also using safety restraints. He did not receive injuries that required ambulance transport.

OSP troopers with the St. Helens office are continuing the investigation, including whether alcohol and/or drugs were contributing factors.

Oregon Department of Transportation personnel established a detour around the accident scene, reopening Highway 30 to traffic about three and one-half hours later, near 7 p.m.

Deputies with the Columbia County Sheriff's Office, and Columbia River Fire and Rescue paramedics provided assistance at the scene.

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