

Four injured in collision on snow-covered Hwy. 97

by Cheryl McDermott

One driver was cited in a two-vehicle collision on slush and snow-covered Highway 97 south of Bend Thursday morning -- an accident that sent two adults and two children to the hospital and closed the highway for one-half hour, authorities reported.

About 10:30 a.m. February 22, Oregon State Police (OSP) were called to the scene of the accident near milepost 147 on Highway 97, about three miles north of Lava Butte and south of Bend.

Pantaleon Bautista of Kennewick, Wash. was cited for failing to drive on the right side of the highway when her van (above) spun out of control on snow-covered Highway 97. Her vehicle struck a pickup (below) driven by Brett Dennis of Bend, sending all four occupants of the vehicles to the hospital. OSP photos. Pantaleon M. Bautista, 33, of Kennewick, Washington was traveling south on Highway 97 when she lost control of her 1997 Chevrolet Astro van on the snow and slush-covered highway, spinning into the oncoming lane of traffic, troopers said.

A northbound 2003 GMC pickup was in the right-hand lane, and its driver, 38-year old Brett M. Dennis of Bend, tried but failed to avoid the spinning van by steering to the right. The passenger-side of the van struck the pickup in the left front corner, OSP reported.

10-year-old Oscar Bautista, a passenger in the van, was not using safety restraints and was ejected from the vehicle. He was found in the southbound lanes of traffic, troopers said. Both Pantaleon Bautista and Oscar Bautista were transported by ambulance to St. Charles Medical Center in Bend for treatment of non-life threatening injuries.

Dennis, the driver of the pickup, and his passenger 4-year-old Ava Dennis were also taken to the hospital with non-life threatening injuries. Troopers say the Dennis child was properly secured in a booster seat in the right rear seating position.

Bautista was cited for failing to drive on the right side of the highway, troopers said, although OSP from the Bend Command Office are continuing the investigation.

Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) personnel, Deschutes County Sheriff's deputies, and local emergency responders assisted at the scene. Highway 97 was closed to traffic for about 30 minutes. Oregon State Police and ODOT reminded drivers that winter conditions in many areas of the State require adjustments in driving and the use of appropriate tires and traction devices. Take the time to monitor road and weather conditions and slow down, they warn.

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