Three injured in Highway 97 three-vehicle crash

by Cheryl McDermott

A Fossil, Oregon man was seriously injured when his vehicle crossed the centerline of Highway 97 south of Madras Tuesday morning and struck a truck and trailer then collided with another car. The occupants of the second car, a Madras man and an infant, were able to escape with minor injuries just as their vehicle caught on fire, Oregon State Police (OSP) reported.

Burke Smejkal was cited for failing to drive in the right lane after he allegedly caused a three vehicle crash on Highway 97 south of Madras on Tuesday - OSP photo About 11:45 a.m., May 22, Burke David Smejkal, 26, of Fossil was traveling south on Highway 97 near milepost 97 when his 1993 Toyota Corolla crossed the centerline and hit the left rear dual tires of an empty dump trailer towed by a large truck, troopers said.

After impact, Smejkalâ€™s Toyota spun around in the northbound lane and struck a 1994 Mercury Grand Marguis driven by Beltran R. Qunitero, a 36-year old Madras resident.

According to the OSP news release, the Mercury left the highway and caught fire just as Qunitero and a 10-month-old boy were able to escape.

Smejkal was transported to Mountainview Hospital in Madras for treatment of non-life threatening but serious injuries. He was cited for failing to drive on the right side of the highway, troopers said.

Qunitero and the child received minor injuries and were also treated at Mountainview Hospital.

The truck driver, identified as 63-year old Lamoine Brant of Powell Butte, was not injured.

OSP troopers from Prineville and Madras are completing the investigation.

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