

Three-vehicle crash blocks Highway 97

by Cheryl McDermott

An Idaho man was cited for following too closely in a three-vehicle crash that blocked Highway 97 for over an hour Saturday afternoon, deputies reported.

Deschutes County Sheriff's deputies, assisted by Oregon State Police, responded to the scene near milepost 159 about 1:30 p.m., June 30, Lt. Shane Nelson said.

Preliminary investigation determined that Jeffrey O'Laughlin, 47, of Salmon, Idaho was traveling north in a 2002 Freightliner semi-truck towing a box trailer when he rear-ended an SUV pulling a flatbed trailer full of rafts that had slowed to go around a man who was walking his bicycle near the guardrail.

O'Laughlin's semi-truck struck the trailer full of rafts, which careened into the oncoming lane of traffic and hit a 1999 Dodge Ram pickup towing a fifth-wheel trailer driven by David Deskines, 65, of Springfield, Nelson said.

The trailer hauling rafts then detached from the SUV, a 2007 Subaru Legacy wagon driven by Andrew Hamilton, 43, of Bonanza, and struck 22-year old Medford resident Jordan Dykstra as he walked his bicycle.

According to the lieutenant, the rafts came off their trailer and went into all lanes of traffic; the Freightliner ended up in the northbound lane; the SUV stopped sideways in front of the Freightliner; and the pickup towing the fifth-wheel trailer stopped in the southbound lane.

Dykstra, the pedestrian, received only minor injuries and none of the other drivers were hurt, Nelson reported, but the highway was completely closed to traffic for over an hour during investigation and cleanup.

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