

The following appeared in the Tacoma, WA News Tribune Aug 3, 2001

Auburn man killed in crash on I-5

CONSTRUCTION ZONE: Truck slams into rear of motor home
Byline: Jason Hagey; The News Tribune

An Auburn man died Thursday when his delivery truck slammed into the rear of a motor home that had slowed for backed-up traffic near a construction zone on Interstate 5 in Tacoma.

The impact crushed the truck's cab and shoved the motor home into a car that had stopped in front of it, the Washington State Patrol said. The car, in turn, hit a compact pickup.

The delivery truck driver was identified as 58-year-old David G. Babcock. He was pronounced dead at the scene.

The drivers of the motor home and car were taken to area hospitals and treated for minor injuries, the State Patrol said. The pickup driver was treated at the scene.

The wreck happened about 9:15 a.m. in a northbound lane of I-5 near the South 56th Street exit, just before the start of a construction zone for the South 38th Street overpass project.

One lane of traffic is closed for the construction. A message board warns drivers of the closure.

Two freeway lanes were shut down for hours because of the wreck, and traffic backed up for miles as emergency workers treated the injured drivers and then worked to separate the delivery truck and the motor home.

Babcock was probably going "freeway speeds" when he hit the motor home, Sgt. Ken Noland said, noting there were only short skid marks on the pavement. The truck, labeled UCI Distribution PLUS, was empty or nearly empty, Noland said. UCI Distribution PLUS is a Burbank, Calif., delivery service with an office in Kent.

Another two-car wreck occurred just a few minutes before the fatal crash in almost the same location. It also involved a motor home. But the State Patrol said that probably wasn't a factor in the second wreck. Both vehicles had pulled to the shoulder and the drivers were exchanging information when the second wreck happened, Noland said.

Faye O'Brien, a passenger in the motor home involved in the first wreck, said she and her husband were on their way to Alaska when the cars in front of them "just came to a sudden stop."

Their motor home struck the car in front of them. It was driven by a Lakewood woman on her way to work in Fife.

Noland attributed the slowdown to the morning commute.

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