

One dead, One Critical in Alcohol Related Crash near Vernonia

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One man is dead, and another is in critical condition following an early morning, single-vehicle crash on Keasey Rd about 1 mile outside Vernonia this morning. A third occupant was also taken to the hospital with unknown injuries.

Sheriff's deputies responded to the crash after a call came in at 5:42 a.m. advising that a vehicle had struck a tree. It was not immediately known at what time the crash occurred, but a neighbor reported hearing something around 3:30 a.m.. The neighbor said she did not investigate the cause of the sound.

When deputies arrived, they found a white, 2001 Dodge Ram Pickup beside a large oak tree, where the vehicle had crashed. The one-ton pickup struck the tree with enough force to send debris flying over 50 feet. One large piece off the trunk of the tree (over 50 pounds in weight) traveled approximately 50 feet. One of the occupants was inside the pickup, unconscious, and two were outside the vehicle. One of the occupants found outside the vehicle, Joshua G. Watson (34 years old, Vernonia) was pronounced dead at the scene. Kasey L. Cooper (22 years old, Yamhill) was taken by Lifelight helicopter to OHSU Hospital and in critical condition. Ryan B. Rowlands (32 years old, Newberg) was transported by ambulance to Emanuel Hospital with unknown injuries.

The crash appears to be related to speed and the consumption of alcoholic beverages, and it remains under investigation. Sheriff's deputies -- with the help of an Oregon State Police crash reconstructionist -- are investigating the crash. The Oregon State Police and Vernonia Fire departments also assisted at the crash scene.