

Crash injures 3 firefighters Engine, truck collide in 2nd emergency-vehicle wreck of day

By ANSLEE WILLETT THE GAZETTE

Three Colorado Springs firefighters rushing to the home of a 2-month-old boy who wasn't breathing were injured Tuesday when their truck collided with a pickup.

None of the injuries to the firefighters or the pickup driver appeared life-threatening, Colorado Springs police said.

Firefighters Kerry Coleman, Robert Barry and Matthew Langley were taken to Memorial Hospital.

Langley was admitted, and Barry and Coleman, the driver, were expected to be released Tuesday.

The pickup driver, George Grove, was taken to Penrose Hospital, treated and released.

In an earlier crash Tuesday in eastern El Paso County, two American Medical Response employees were injured when their ambulance slid on ice and crashed into a ditch.

"It's been a tragic day for (emergency medical services) in Colorado Springs," AMR spokesman Doug Moore said.

After the fire engine crashed about 10:30 a.m. at Academy Boulevard and Hancock Expressway, another one was sent immediately to the infant's home.

An AMR ambulance had arrived at the home, and medical help for the infant wasn't delayed because of the crash, said Lt. Glenn Conklin of the Colorado Springs Fire Department.

The boy, who had a history of heart disease, was pronounced dead about 11:45 a.m.

The fire engine, coming from another call, was eastbound on Hancock Expressway when it entered the intersection and collided with the southbound Chevrolet pickup.

The fire engine rolled once, landing on its wheels.

Red, green and orange hoses and other fire equipment were scattered around the truck, and its left side caved in.

The 2004 truck, based at Station 11 on Jet Wing Drive near Academy Boulevard, was valued at \$500,000.

"It appears that the (fire) engine is totaled," Conklin said.

The pickup had heavy damage to its front end, and its black toolbox was knocked off.

Jason Noel, a King Soopers employee, was collecting grocery carts in the parking lot when he heard the fire engine drive along Hancock Expressway.



“Then I heard a big, giant crash,” he said, while watching police and firefighters work at the scene. “It was like a big boom.”

The wreck was still under investigation, but it appeared the fire engine entered the intersection on a red light, police said.

Emergency vehicles are allowed to go through red lights after making sure it’s safe to proceed.

“We just don’t roll through red lights willy-nilly,” Conklin said.

Driving to emergencies “is probably one of the most dangerous things we do,” Conklin said. “We haven’t had an engine roll like this in a long time.”

In the other accident Tuesday, the ambulance crash took place about 8:30 a.m. on U.S. Highway 24 near Soap Weed Drive, east of Calhan.

“They hit some black ice,” Moore said. “They didn’t even realize they were on ice.”

He didn’t know what kind of emergency they were headed to.

Driver Kevin Collins, 29, a paramedic, suffered a broken back and was admitted to Memorial Hospital.

Travis Krull, 27, an emergency medical technician, had broken ribs. He was released from the

hospital.

Moore couldn't recall the last time an AMR ambulance was involved in a crash.

"We haven't had an accident to this severe nature in a long time," he said.

CONTACT THE WRITER: 636-0366 or

awillett@gazette.com

BRYAN OLLER, THE GAZETTE CLEANUP: Firefighters and trainees pick up equipment and debris after a collision Tuesday morning between a fire engine from Station 11 and a pickup at Hancock Expressway and Academy Boulevard. The engine rolled once, injuring three firefighters who were sent to Memorial Hospital, where one was hospitalized. The pickup driver was treated at another hospital and released. Traffic was detoured in all four directions.