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Barrier takes hits

Crossovers prevented by safety device

The Purcell Register (405) 527-2126

Purcell, OK -- A cable barrier located in the median on Interstate 35 proved itself last week by stopping several vehicles from crossing into oncoming traffic.

Four accidents occurred between the 97 and 100 mile markers Friday afternoon when a rain storm came through the area.

There are two separate cable barriers along the interstate north of Purcell. One is located between the 98.5 and 99.5 mile markers, while the second begins at the 104 and goes one mile north.

The barrier between the 98.5 and 99.5 mile markers was hit at least four times. Vehicles took out the posts, but the elastic-type cable held and kept the vehicles from crossing into oncoming traffic.

Around 4:24 p.m. Friday, a 2005 Chevrolet sedan, driven by Angela Espinoza, of Dallas, Texas, was going north in the outside lane. Trooper Clay Anderson said Espinoza made an unsafe lane change striking the rear of a 2004 Freightliner driven by Richard Scruggs of Summerville, Ga.

Espinoza's car came to rest sideways in the inside lane and was struck broadside by a 1999 Ford F250 driven by Roger Cunningham of Alva.

Both vehicles went into the median striking the cable barrier, Anderson said.

Around 8 p.m. Friday, a southbound vehicle wiped out the cable barrier posts, then fled the scene.

Anderson said two other accidents were investigated in the same area.

A wreck at I-35 and state Highway 9 around 6:52 p.m. Friday, will lead Trooper Anderson to seek an arrest warrant for the driver.

Jordon Contreras of Vero Beach, Fla., was getting onto I-35 from Highway 9 when he lost control of his 1997 GMC Jimmy. The vehicle struck the guardrail and rolled three times. Contreras fled the scene on foot.

All of the accidents occurring along I-35 Friday were the result of people driving too fast on the wet road.

Early Monday morning, an Oklahoma Department of Transportation (ODOT) crew was replacing the posts taken out by the out-of-control vehicles.

ODOT spokesperson David Mueser said repair to the cable barrier was easy and better yet, the barrier probably saved some lives.

There has been talk about placing additional cable barriers along the stretch of interstate north of Purcell. Emergency personnel have expressed concern as to cross over points in the cable barriers for emergency turn arounds.

Over the years, countless lives have been taken along the stretch of interstate. The cable barriers have proven to be a safety device at least in the two locations.

The Purcell Register

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