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Local News

Illinois doctor killed in massive I-94 pileup

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Mark Parren /H-P correspondent Emergency personnel stand next to some of the 60 to 70 cars that were damaged Sunday in a series of rear-end collisions on Interstate 94 near the Niles Road overpass in Royalton Township. An Illinois doctor was killed when his car hit the back of a semi-truck that had stopped for the crashes.

By DENNIS COGSWELL - H-P Region Editor

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ST. JOSEPH - Blowing, swirling snow which sharply reduced visibility was blamed for a series of rear-end collisions on Interstate 94 Sunday, one of which led to the death of an Illinois physician.

Dr. Raymond Candage III, 31, of Elgin, Ill., who was six months away from completing his residency as a cardiologist, was killed about 12:38 p.m. when his 2007 Hyundai Accent slammed into the rear end of a semi-truck in the eastbound lane. The truck, driven by Joseph Bernard, 42, of London, Ontario, had stopped in the left lane just east of the Niles Avenue overpass in Royalton Township for a massive pileup. Bernard and a passenger were not injured.

Candage "sheared the roof right off the top of his car," said Berrien Sheriff's Lt. Don Goulouze.

At the time, Candage was on the way from Chicago to visit his estranged wife in the Battle Creek area, Goulooze said.

In all, 60 to 70 vehicles were damaged in a series of chain reaction rear-end crashes that started about 12:30 p.m., according to Trooper Matthew Churchill of the Bridgman post. He said another 10 to 20 vehicles either went into the ditch or got stuck. None of the injuries were believed to be life-threatening.

"It started out with a few vehicles, and within a matter of minutes (scores of cars were involved)," he said. "The blowing snow and the poor visibility were contributing factors."

The National Weather Service issued a blizzard warning Sunday, which remains in effect until 10 a.m. today. The forecast called for an additional 2 to 4 inches of snow today, with more snow possible on Tuesday.

Whipped by winds of up to 40 mph, the blowing snow also contributed to dozens of other accidents on I-94.

It was a tough day for emergency and road personnel.

Berrien Springs-Oronoko Township Police Chief Milt Agay said Officer Rob Christner of his department was assisting with an accident on I-94 near John Beers Road in Lincoln Township when his car was rear-ended and destroyed. Christner, who was not in the vehicle at the time, was not injured.

Goulooze said a state police car, assisting at the scene of the massive pileup near Niles Avenue, was damaged, but no one was injured. A Michigan Department of Transportation truck was hit near Hartford and a Coloma Ambulance was struck in another crash near Friday and Hill roads. There were no injuries.

"People are just driving too fast for conditions," said Trooper Joe Cook, who worked the accidents with Churchill.

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