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Four hospitalized after fiery Pompano Beach crash

February 17, 2014 | By Rebeca Piccardo, Sun Sentinel

Marquis Hoggins' early shift at the International House of Pancakes on Monday went from serving juice to saving lives when four vehicles collided in a burst of smoke and flames just outside.

Hoggins, 21, was behind the counter reaching for a glass of orange juice at the Pompano Beach restaurant when he heard a loud screech and looked up to see a black Toyota Celica slide under a Ford F-150 pickup and catch fire.

With the smell of burning rubber filling the air, Hoggins and several others raced outside, he said. Hoggins helped pull the woman at the wheel of the Toyota, who had "blood on her face," out of the blazing car. The drivers of the three other vehicles were scrambling on the ground, trying to distance themselves from the fire, he said.

"It was very chaotic; I'm surprised no one was killed," he said.

The four victims of the 7 a.m. crash at West Sample Road and North Andrews Avenue were taken to Broward Health North in Deerfield Beach. Their identities and conditions were not available Monday, an official said.

While bystanders were calling 911, recording video of the wreckage and trying to move away from the blaze, Hoggins' concern was whether anyone remained in any of the vehicles.

"I knew the fire would make the tires explode," he said. "Everything was happening so fast. Everyone was wondering if there was someone left in one of the cars."

The fire and thick black smoke from the crash prompted bystanders to send photographs to the Sun Sentinel.

The collision was set into motion, Pompano Beach Fire Rescue spokeswoman Sandra King said, when the Celica's driver, heading west on Sample Road, went over the railroad tracks and rear-ended the F-150, which was slowing for a red light. The Toyota lodged under the truck, King said.

"The pickup truck's gas tank was dislodged and caught fire," King said.

After the critically injured and burned 45-year-old woman was pulled from her car, she wandered about 200 yards from the crash until Pompano Beach Fire Rescue paramedics caught up to her, King said.

The other cars involved in the crash included a Mazda pickup that ended up partially under the F-150 and a Honda Civic that was rear-ended by the F-150.

Two of the other drivers, both men, were pulled from the wreckage, Hoggins said, and another man was able to get out of his car on his own.

Morning traffic through the intersection and on other nearby roadways was affected until 10:30 a.m., when the charred and wrecked vehicles were removed from the scene and roads were reopened.

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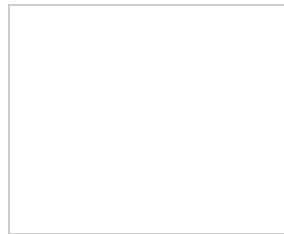
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