



Highway 59 accident claims three lives

HARLAN -- Three local residents died Wednesday morning, Oct. 26 in a tragic two-vehicle, head-on collision along Highway 59 near the Harlan Airport.

Robert Schwery, 71, and his wife, Marcella, 68, of Panama, died at the scene, as did 26-year-old Christina Cotant, Avoca.

According to Iowa State Patrol reports, a 1999 Cadillac driven by Marcella Schwery was southbound on Highway 59 and crossed the center line at about 10:30 a.m. Wednesday, four miles south of Harlan. A 2008 Ford driven by Cotant was northbound on Highway 59 and the two vehicles collided head



In the photo at top, rescue personnel attend to one of the drivers in the accident. This vehicle ended up in the east ditch on its side. Directly above, the other vehicle involved in the accident came to rest next to a state trooper vehicle that was on the shoulder of the road on a traffic stop. (Photos by Bob Bjoir)

on in the northbound lane.

The Schwery vehicle spun around and collided with an Iowa State Patrol vehicle, parked on the shoulder of the road. The patrol vehicle was working traffic with another state trooper, and both trooper vehicles were on traffic stops with emergency lights activated.

Following the collision, the

Cotant vehicle entered the east ditch.

The trooper on the traffic stop was unjured as he was out of his vehicle at the traffic stop.

Officials at the scene said it appeared as if the Schwery vehicle attempted to move to the northbound lane around the law

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Three died in Highway 59 accident

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enforcement, which was parked on the shoulder of the road, and the Cotant vehicle was in that lane. The two vehicles collided on each vehicles' driver's side.

Responding to the scene were at least 10 Iowa State Patrol officers as well as officers from the Shelby County Sheriff's Department, Harlan Fire Department, Avoca Rescue and Medivac Ambulance/Rescue.

Life Flight helicopter was initially called to the scene but was cancelled once it was determined that all three individuals had died at the scene.

Highway 59 was closed for about three hours while authorities attended to the accident scene.

Funeral services are pending at Pauley Jones Funeral Home for Marcella "Sally" (Dresen) Schwery, 68, and Robert A. Schwery, 71, both of Panama.

For more information contact the funeral home at 712-755-3135.

Funeral services are pending for Cotant.