

# Local man airlifted to hospital after train accident

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Managing Editor

A white Chevrolet pickup truck was struck at 8:10 p.m. Aug. 26 by a Norfolk Southern train on Cook Road. The driver, a Gibsonville native, was airlifted to Chapel Hill.

Barry Kevin Shelton, 51, the driver of the vehicle, suffered several lacerations and had labored breathing. He was the sole passenger.

Gibsonville Police Chief Mike Woznick said Shelton had some sort of medical ailment that may or may not have played a role in the cause of the accident. The police will know more when the medical reports are released, which, he said, could take more than a week to be completed.

Shelton was in the middle of the railroad crossing arms when he was hit by the train.

"You can drive right through the rails. They're made of thin wood," Elon Fire Department Chief Eddie King said. "The last thing you want to do is panic. With that train coming by, you have no time to react."

King said the cargo trains can go as fast as 35 to 50 miles per hour, but he didn't know how fast this train was going. The westbound train has three locomotives and 98 cars, said Rob Shapman, Norfolk Southern train representative. His records show the accident took place at 7:50 p.m. and the track speed limit was 50 mph. A Federal Railroad Administration Office of Safety Analysis shows there have been no other accidents at the Cook Road site.

Gibsonville Police Patrol Officer Alex McCollum is handling the case, and he said the incident report could take several weeks before it can be released.

"We had to subpoena medical records," he said. "And a reconstruction team has to complete their report."

At this point, police are unsure if Shelton's medical history played a role in the accident. Shelton could not be reached for comment, but a UNC Medical Center spokesperson said he was in stable condition Friday, Aug. 27.

Cook Road dissects the Town of Elon and the Town of Gibsonville. Elon Fire Department and Gibsonville Police Department are handling the accident. Alamance Emergency Responders also reported to the scene.

A group of Elon University students was across the road at Phoenix West Apartments when the accident happened. They were at the hot tub between two



Police officers talk to reporters near the accident. Gibsonville Police Patrol Officer Alex McCollum said the incident report could take several weeks to complete. JACK DODSON | Photographer

buildings, where three students had a direct view of the incident.

"I just saw the train go by and I happened to look up and I saw smoke," junior Katie Franklin said. "I didn't really hear it."

Junior Jason Apple said right after the incident, the glass from the car was sprayed through the air — what Franklin said looked like particles hanging in the air. Apple said he saw the car in the air as it was hit.

"The glass just blew out," Apple said. "(The train) tossed the car — it looked like a cardboard box."

The students said they ran immediately toward the road by the accident and talked to drivers passing by, trying to figure out what had happened. Franklin said they didn't call 911 right away because they saw a police car at the intersection.

Sophomore Meg Plummer, who contributed to this report, was in the nearby pizza restaurant Anna Maria's Pizzeria when the accident happened. She said she found out when she watched a police officer sprint from the store after he'd been paged that the incident had occurred close by.

"On the walkie-talkie they said, 'It's right where you are,'" Plummer said.

## Lease to local business owner fulfills part of The Elon Commitment

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school officials about turning the business over to him. He said the opportunity was a good one because it relieved Elon of the liability of owning a bar.

With The Elon Commitment 10-year strategic plan underway, the school has been looking to attract local business owners to develop the downtown area. Whittington said leasing the bar to Russell presented a good opportunity to do that.

"What we're trying to do is facilitate retail development in the town any way we can," Whittington said.

He said the development of downtown Elon comes from three places — the town itself, the school and the participation of local entrepreneurs who invest in businesses in Elon.

## Wagner suspected in similar cases

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charged," she said. "It hasn't stopped him (in the past), so while we know we have arrested him for this, it doesn't mean he's not going to continue doing it. So you definitely don't need to be letting your guard down because we have made an arrest."

Wagner's record includes second degree trespassing in 2003 and indecent exposure in 1998 in Alamance County.

In Orange County, he was found guilty of secret peeping, simple assault and harassing phone calls in 1991, indecent exposure and probation violation in 1993, and indecent exposure in 1994.

In the upcoming weeks, the Elon Police Department will go through all of the

Russell said his recent opening of The Town Table and move to open College Street Tap House came from a good opportunity to step up in the market he calls the most important in Alamance County.

"For the past probably year or so, we've been talking to the university," he said. "We want to be here and help develop the spot."

He said down the road, he sees the downtown being much larger than it is now.

"It just becomes a whole hub of commerce," Russell said. "Lots of opportunity for merchants. And the town and the students are the ones who are going to benefit."

indecent exposure cases to see which cases Wagner is likely to be a suspect.

Dean of Student Life Smith Jackson sent an e-mail to students Monday afternoon with a photo of Wagner and a press release from the Elon Police Department.

"Keep your doors locked and walk in pairs," Jackson said. "You just never know when something like this could happen. It is everyone's responsibility to keep things safe and secure."

Police reports show there have been more than 10 indecent exposure cases since 2008. Some are seemingly connected while others appear to be single incidents. Wagner's court case is set for Oct. 4.



A white Chevrolet pickup truck was struck by a train on Cook Road near University Drive Thursday evening. The man, Barry Shelton, 51, was airlifted to the hospital, suffering from several lacerations. MEG PLUMMER | Photographer

"(The police officer) all of the sudden put down his drink and sprinted out to the train. People in the restaurant started getting up and looking out the window — people got up and were rushing to the

train, were crying hysterically. It was very surreal ... there were parts everywhere."

Jack Dodson, Meg Plummer and Pam Richter contributed to this report.

## Sidetrack Grill closed because of rent issues

Jack Dodson  
News Editor

Mike Dula, Elon's town manager, confirmed Sidetrack Grill was closed mid-August because rent was not being paid on the building.

Dula said the town is not involved in the closing of the restaurant, but the building's owner, Joel Brown, had taken the action against Sidetrack Grill.

A sign on the front door of the establishment reads: "Sidetracks is permanently closed. We would like to thank all our patrons for years of support. Please continue to support local businesses on Lebanon Ave."

Elon University has no interest in buying the building and won't be involved in what happens to it, said Gerald Whittington, Elon's vice president for business, finance and technology.

Sidetrack Grill has had related issues in the past, including a brief closing during March 2009 because of tax evasion. During that time, the restaurant was closed by the North Carolina Department of Revenue.

According to a restaurant employee and Elon student, Sidetrack Grill also had trouble paying its employees. The anonymous employee, who asked to remain unnamed, said workers were paid under the table and never had to pay taxes on their wages, which were rarely paid on time.

"Basically we would get paid in

cash at random," the employee said. "We were supposed to get paid every Friday, but that never happened."

When Sidetrack Grill was closed down recently, the employee said the restaurant never called to explain.

"I have just heard from a cook who used to work there that for a while they've been having money issues," the employee said. "They didn't call me."

The worker also said managers at the restaurant never required a W-4, and if the tips didn't cover the difference between wages and minimum wage, the restaurant wouldn't always raise pay.

"Your employer is only required to pay \$2.13 an hour in direct wages if that amount plus the tips received equals at least the federal minimum wage of \$7.25 per hour," according to PayWizard.org, a Harvard Law School-affiliated website.

The restaurant, located at 110 W. Lebanon Ave., was owned and operated by Chad Snyder, an Elon alumnus and former adjunct religious studies professor. Snyder also formerly owned Lighthouse Tavern and Deli, until he was arrested in late 2007 for possession with the intent to sell and/or deliver cocaine. He was later charged with possessing approximately 165 mL of Schedule I GHB, a common date rape drug, violating the Controlled Substance Act.

Brown and Snyder could not be reached for comment.