

I-85 truck wreck slows traffic in KM

An early morning truck wreck in the southbound lanes of I-85 near Kings Mountain stalled traffic for most several hours Tuesday. The accident sent trucker Ronald Wendell Thatch, 49, of Norfolk, Va., and his passenger Charlene Jones, 31, to Carolinas Medical Center. Thatch was listed in critical condition and Jones was treated and released.

The accident occurred when Thatch apparently lost control of his rig and struck a car parked on the side of the highway. The truck rolled several times and ended up in a patch of woods. Both Thatch and Jones were pinned inside the

mangled wreckage for nearly two hours before they could be cut free.

The car Thatch struck, a 1988 Pontiac, was unoccupied at the time of the accident. Thatch's truck was loaded with paint, soap, and machine parts for Jevic Transportation, based in Delanco, N.J. Crews worked for an hour to try and clean the mess up and drain diesel fuel from the truck's tanks.

Members of the Gastonia Fire Department, Bessemer City and South Gastonia Volunteer Fire Departments, and Chapel Grove Fire Department took part in the operation.

MERGER

From 1A

impose on the citizens of the county, nor the fact that a huge majority of citizens are against merger

"What our lawyers are arguing is that irreparable harm would be done if the State Board approves it and the commissioners pick an interim board and they start taking actions to be implemented on July 1 and then find out that it has to go back to court," he said.

Hawkins said he is concerned that if the State Board approves the merger plan, it becomes law and that the merger can't be reversed.

"Judges just listen to the law, not the emotions of the people," Hawkins said. "All they're concerned about is the specifics of the law, and that's all the State Board is concerned about. They could care less if our people are going to be taxed. They don't care that two of the commissioners were put out of office. They don't care that our senior citizens won't be able to pay their taxes. Basically, they're just going to be like our county commissioners and turn a deaf

ear to the people.

"But I think part of what the judge was saying was, 'if you've got such a strong case for the Gaston County kids, you shouldn't be afraid to let the State Board hear it.' Then, if they approve it illegally, we could get any judge to give us an injunction to make sure the state law is taken care of."

Hawkins said the irreparable harm is really being done by the county commissioners against the people.

"The irreparable harm is the way they've got this county fractured, and they're going to have to tax our citizens to the extreme to make their plans work for whatever reason they want them to work.

"The three school boards have a plan that would address everything they stated in their merger plan without the tax implication," he said. "It bothers me that they are so close minded that they can't see the harm they're doing to this county and the burden they're putting on the senior citizens. Maybe there should be a lawsuit against the county commissioners based on the irreparable harm they've caused to the citizens of the county."

Inducement guidelines approved

The Cleveland County Board of Commissioners approved guidelines for three economic inducement programs at a special called meeting Tuesday.

Programs include a Public Infrastructure Program, Cleveland County Industrial Inducement Program, and a Cleveland County Industrial Park Inducement Program. The purpose of the programs is to lure and retain business and industry in the county, and are open to existing or new firms in

Cleveland County.

In order for a company to become eligible for any inducements offered by Cleveland County, certain criteria must be met. These criteria include, level of investment in land, building, and equipment, number and type of jobs to be created, written notification by the company on jobs to be retained, timetable for investment and job creation/retention, potential for future expansion and increase employment, and determination of investment and job

creation in a State Development Zone.

Any offerings of inducement programs is based upon availability of funds within the General Fund at the time of the company's program selection.

The Public Infrastructure Program may be used to provide water and sewer line extensions along a public right-of-way or public easement provided the program parameters are adhered to. The Cleveland County Industrial Inducement Program may be

used for the purpose-based upon a percentage of the new net investment of the project-for reimbursement for site preparation and on site infrastructure for sites outside of the Cleveland County Industrial Park or a cash grant. The Cleveland County Industrial Park Inducement Program allows the County Board of Commissioners the option to provide limited site and infrastructure improvements as part of the purchase agreement for property in the Park.

Rubella on rise in North Carolina

Rubella is on the rise. Already this year, over 40 cases of rubella, also known as German Measles, have been reported across North Carolina.

State Health Director Dennis McBride is asking everyone in North Carolina to be extra diligent in determining their immunization status and to obtain a rubella shot if they are uncertain about whether they have ever been vaccinated.

To date, 43 cases of rubella have been confirmed in 13 counties: Durham, Forsyth, Guilford, Henderson, Iredell, Jackson, Mecklenburg, Orange, Randolph, Stanly, Union, Wake, and Yadkin. Cleveland County has not reported any cases of rubella, according to Beth Moore, nursing director for the Cleveland County Health Department.

While this number is not statistically alarming, North Carolina's growing status as a cultural crossroads represents an increasing possibility that there are newcomers and visitors who have never been vaccinated.

Rubella is not the common, or red, measles. It is caused by a virus and is highly contagious. Rubella is especially dangerous to pregnant women because it can cause severe damage to the unborn child. If a pregnant woman contracts rubella her

child can be born with congenital malformations such as mental retardation, deafness, sight or heart deficiencies.

The symptoms of rubella include slight fever, rash, joint pain, swollen glands, red eyes and runny nose. If anyone has these symptoms they should call their local health department at once and stay at home to avoid transmitting the disease to others. Less than half of the people with the infection do not show any symptoms at all, but can still pass the disease along.

This is the fifth year in a row that rubella outbreaks have been reported in North Carolina. The numbers of reported cases were 87 in 1996, 60

in 1997, 15 in 1998, and 27 in 1999. Most cases occur in April and the summer months.

Rubella in the United States is a disease that is mostly under control due to a practice of systematic, ongoing application of the preventative measures applied to the general population. When sufficient levels of vaccinations are reached in the population, the number of protected persons is enough to break the chain of transmission of the disease when a case is brought into the community.

However, there are sometimes specific groups in the community where this general level of protection is not found, because of having not been reached by such a prevention

program. In North Carolina, we have witnessed this phenomenon in the past few years, with repeated outbreaks of rubella affecting mostly the recently established Hispanic community.

The nature of control efforts deployed in response to an outbreak is adapted to the specific circumstances. Most cases in the recent and current outbreaks of rubella in North Carolina are among Hispanics and therefore this is where the response is concentrated. Because this is the fifth consecutive year that outbreaks have occurred, special measures like outreach immunization campaigns have been applied recently across the state.

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