

UPDATE--Two Van Wrecks in 12 Hours

Written by Steve Frank
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Two van accidents yesterday, but fortunately, no life threatening injuries. Last night, a van rolled off a hill on Rich Mountain Road about 7pm. The van was on its top down a steep embankment when Todd first responders and Zionville rescuers arrived, the disabled woman unable to get out of the van. Rescuers had to cut into the van to reach 70-year old Kathryn Pennell, then use ropes to pull the stokes basket up the steep hill to get her to a waiting ambulance. Trooper Townsend did not charge the Todd woman in the crash.

A van with seven passengers careened off of Hubert Thomas Road at about 9:45 yesterday morning, injuring a number of the occupants. The crash was just off US 321, the van running off of the dirt connector between the highway and Old Watauga River Road, rolling over down a steep hill before coming to rest on its top. Cove Creek Fire and first responders arrived to report one man in the roadway, with Watauga Medics right behind, calling for air transport of first one, then a second chopper arrived, but no one was transported on that flight. US 321 was shut down as the bridge over the Watauga River was the best option for a landing zone, and there two WINGS Air Rescue choppers took turns at the landing zone. Watauga Rescue joined several Watauga Medics ambulances on the scene to transport 4 of the injured to Watauga Medical Center, and at least five of the seven passengers were either airlifted or transported, according to officials at the scene. Trooper Hendrix of the state patrol charged Emanuel Santiago with an Unsafe Movement and No Operators License. He said that the 7 had just finished work in the adjacent cabbage field when the accident occurred. None of the injuries were life threatening. He said that all of the van occupants lived in Ashe County.