

Wrong-way driver causes head-on crash on I-271

Jeff Piorkowski *Special to Sun News*

Mayfield police are investigating a head-on crash on Interstate 271 caused by a wrong-way driver that left three people hospitalized.

Around 3:20 a.m. April 2, a Toyota Corolla was reported heading the wrong way in the area of Interstate 90 and I-271. Officers from several departments responded to the area looking for the vehicle.

"Unfortunately, before the vehicle could be located, it crashed head-on with another vehicle on I-271 in the northbound express lanes near Wilson Mills Road," said Mayfield Police Chief Paul Matias.

The southbound Toyota was driven into an oncoming Chevrolet pickup truck heading north in the express lanes.

The Toyota was driven by a Cleveland man, 26. A Cleveland woman, 25, was a passenger in the Corolla.

The driver of the pickup truck was a Cleveland man, 48.

All three people were taken to Hillcrest Hospital with serious injuries. No update was available on their conditions.

"We haven't determined if alcohol was involved or what other issues may have been involved," Matias said.

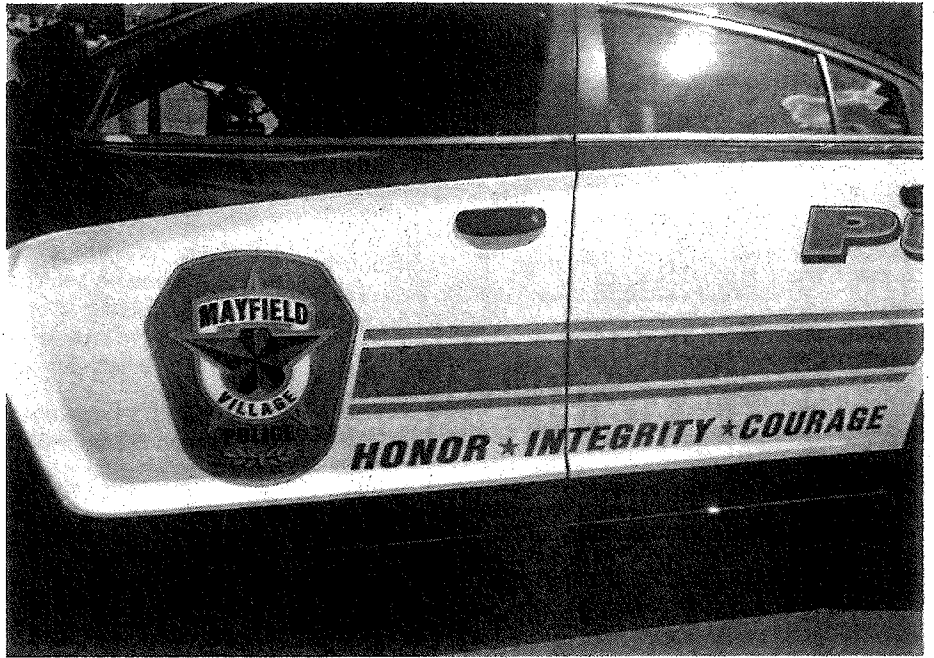
Matias said police were first made aware of the crash when multiple calls were received at the Lake County Dispatch Center, which notified police in Mayfield and possibly Mayfield Heights.

"By the time the crash happened, we had (police from) Willoughby Hills, (Mayfield Village), Mayfield Heights and Highland Heights responding," Matias said.

Speaking about the wrong-way Toyota, Matias said: "We still don't know where they were coming from or how long they had been going the wrong way, but we think it may have started somewhere on I-90. But we don't know how they got on (the freeway) or how they ended up going the wrong way."

It was just two months ago, Matias said, on Feb. 2, that Mayfield police located and stopped a wrong-way driver on I-271. That car was traveling south in the northbound lanes. "Luckily, the vehicle was located and the driver arrested for OVI before it crashed," he said.

"It seems like (wrong-way drivers) are becoming more of a problem. In my 20 years on the road before I was promoted to chief, I can think of two or three incidents in my career when we had wrong-way drivers.



Mayfield Village police are investigating an April 2 crash on I-271 that involved a wrong-way driver. *Andy Attina, Special to Sun News*

"Usually, they would realize they were going the wrong way and turn around, but now, in these cases, it seems they're going the wrong way for quite some distance."

The crash added to what has been an active 2023 on I-271 in Mayfield.

"So far in 2023, on our three-mile stretch of I-271, we have had two wrong-way drivers, a cruiser on a traffic stop struck by a distracted driver and officers have issued over 50 citations for vehicles traveling over 90 mph," Matias said.

In the case of the damaged cruiser, Matias said an officer was on a traffic stop and was sitting in the police car when a driver clipped off the vehicle's side mirror. The officer was uninjured and the distracted driver was stopped and cited.

Speaking of the citations given to speeders, the chief said those 50 ticketed do not even include those found traveling more than 90 mph on the police hand-held camera when photo enforcement is in effect, which is weekdays during morning and afternoon rush hours.

"We can't say it enough," Matias said. "Don't drink and drive, don't text and drive, move over for emergency vehicles and please slow down."

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Mayfield Police Chief Paul Matias

*Sun
4/13/23*

POLICE BLOTTER

Continues from A2

MAYFIELD

Suspicious activity *Beechers Brook Drive*

A resident reported at 1:51 a.m. March 30 that he went to let his dog out and found an unknown male suspect going through his car in the garage. He said the suspect was wearing a hoodie and quickly rolled out of the garage under the door, which had been left open about a foot to allow access for a pet. Responding officers did not find the suspect in the area, and the resident said he did not see where he went. Nothing was reported stolen from the car.

Unwanted guest *Beta Drive*

The general manager at the Hilton Garden Inn reported March 29 that a man had just been fired and was yelling at the staff. Officers responded to the business to remove the man, but he was already outside the hotel. He subsequently left without incident when a ride arrived for him.

Suspicious activity *Kenwood Drive*

A resident said April 1 that a gust of wind had blown open an access door to her garage attic. She asked that an officer check the home, because she was concerned that somebody may have been in the attic, although she never saw anybody enter the home. An officer assisted and found everything OK.

Suspicious activity *Wilson Mills Road*

An employee of Jersey Mike's Subs reported April 3 that somebody had called the store claiming to be the owner and asked that a manager meet him outside, behind the store. The manager called the owner and confirmed that he had not called. He did not go outside or hear anybody knock at the door, but wanted officers to provide special attention.

Police Blotter

Theft *Beta Drive*

An owner of a local business reported April 3 that money had been stolen from the company by a co-owner.

It was believed that the Lyndhurst woman, 57, had removed \$30,000 from the company's bank account without consent.

Disturbance *Beta Drive*

Officers responded to the Holiday Inn April 3 on a report of a man causing a disturbance at the bar at Alfredo's at the Inn. They learned that the man used a few swear words and the bartender took offense. It was agreed that the man would pay his bill and go to his room for the night.