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Firefighters Legs Crushed At Wildland Fire

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North Carolina - A Candor firefighter lost his left leg after he was injured in a traffic accident Thursday at the scene of a woods fire in Montgomery County. The firefighter, Earl Harrington, 43, of Candor was pinned between a fire truck and another vehicle which struck the emergency vehicle due to low visibility from smoke caused by the Thursday afternoon fire at 1906 Cole Road, near Brewer Road.

Harrington was reported to be in stable condition Friday afternoon at University of North Carolina Hospitals in Chapel Hill, according to Corey Roberts, Montgomery County emergency services director.

Roberts said the Candor Fire Department unit arrived at 2:14 p.m. at the woods fire which was reported at 2:04 p.m. As firefighters went to the rear of the truck to put out cones and get hoses to fight the fire, a passing Jeep hit the fire truck, pinning Harrington between the vehicles. A second vehicle, also traveling eastbound on the two-lane rural road, then hit the Jeep. No other firefighters were injured.

Harrington was airlifted from a landing zone near the scene to the Chapel Hill medical facility. He was originally listed in serious condition and underwent surgery Thursday night. More surgery, to repair his right leg, was scheduled on Friday.

"It pinned his legs," Roberts said of the accident. "His left leg had to be amputated."

Harrington has been a volunteer firefighter for about six months and has worked for the Town of Candor for two years.

The accident was investigated by the N.C. Highway Patrol. Trooper E.C. Underwood said both drivers were charged with exceeding a safe speed due to the smoky conditions and poor visibility. The report indicated that the fire truck was parked along the eastbound lane with its emergency lights on.

Clifton Donald Maness, 63, of Biscoe was the driver of the 2010 Jeep which hit the fire truck. He was transported to Moore Regional Hospital in Pinehurst for evaluation. His vehicle received an estimated $23,000 damage.

Brittany Hancox Parsons, 28, of Biscoe was driving the second vehicle, a 2012 Toyota passenger car, which received an estimated $2,000 damage. She was not injured.

The Candor fire truck had an estimated $3,000 damage.

The N.C. Forest Service is investigating the woods fire for which another fire department was called to the scene to assist.

Written by Kathi Keys

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