

Injuries, vehicle damage avoided in near-miss by Enders Dam

Written by Wauneta Breeze
Thursday, 08 May 2014 00:00 -



Chase County Sheriff Kevin Mueller maintains traffic control at one end of the accident scene north of Enders Dam as a Department of Roads plow moves the spilled distiller's grain off the highway. (Jan Schultz | The Imperial Republican)

By Jan Schultz

The Imperial Republican

The scene could have been much worse Monday morning, when a semi-trailer and a pickup avoided a collision just north of Enders Dam on Highway 61.

Chase County Sheriff Kevin Mueller credits the good driving skills of Steven Dockery of Palisade, driver of the 2006 Kenworth, for avoiding a major collision.

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"I'm just thankful for that and that injury was avoided," Mueller said.

Bob Mendenhall Sr., of Imperial was in a 2011 Ford pickup, which had stopped on the west shoulder of the highway, facing south, to visit with another driver in a second vehicle.

Mueller said when he got back into his pickup, Mendenhall told him he looked over his shoulder to the north, saw no vehicles approaching so turned around on the highway to head north.

However, a curve in the highway blocked the view of Dockery's approaching semi-trailer, Mueller said.

"The semi swerved to the right to miss Bob," as he hit his brakes, Mueller continued.

That caused a shift in the load of distiller's grain the semi was carrying, part of which then spilled out of the open trailer from the top.

It sent an estimated 3,000 pounds of the sticky grain product onto the highway, causing a driving hazard in itself.

After his investigation at the scene, Mueller was aided with traffic control by the Neb. Dept. of Roads. The department sent a snow plow from its Benkelman office to move the grain off the highway. A payloader then scraped the road surface and a street sweeper moved off more of the grain, before the area was hosed down.

Traffic was able to move through the area with Mueller and a roads department employee at both ends of the accident scene.

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Mendenhall said there was no collision of the two vehicles or injuries to the drivers. The vehicles were not damaged, either, he said.

Dockery is employed by Hagan Transport of Culbertson.