



## **SURVIVAL FACTORS ATTACHMENT**

### **Interviews**

**Greenville, AL**

**HWY21MH009**

(10 pages)

## Survival Factors Interviews

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### 1 GEM's Ambulance Service

NTSB: Thomas Barth

EMS medics from GEMS in Greenville AL

June 21, 2026 at the Butler County Emergency Management Center

Investigator Barth spoke with Wayne Garlock and Adam Garlock, medics at GEMS in Greenville AL.

They indicated that other EMS agencies that responded were GFD, Burkeville, Pintala, Sandy Ridge, Ft. Deposit. The fire/rescue agencies were GFD, Liberty VFD, Central VFD, Shackleville VFD, Searcy VFD, and Montgomery heavy rescue. They noted that there were 8 deceased in the van on-scene, with approximate ages from 3 to 17 years old. The van was from the Tallapoosa County Sherriff Ranch. He provided contact information for the medical examiner and the Montgomery Fire Department which assisted with the extrication of deceased. He noted that 2 of the fatalities were in the black SUV for a total of 10. The driver of the SUV was injured and first transported to Greenville Regional by GEMS and then transferred to Baptists South. GEMS transported the 9-month-old to Greenville Regional, and was concerned that outlook was poor, and the child was pronounced deceased at the hospital. They noted that the GFD E42 was one of the first units on scene. He believed the first ranking officer on scene was Bat. Ch. Sullivan. He provided the contact point for the Butler County E911. He also described that the GFD has 2 ALS units. The other EMS agencies were Haynes and CARE, which are both owned by Haynes. Haynes has both ALS and BLS units, as well as the life flight. There was an attempt to put 2 life flight units enroute, but they were grounded by weather. So instead, the aircrew medics assisted the ground EMS. The 2 aircrews are based in Troy AL and Wetumpka AL. GEMS 103 transported the 9-month old to Greenville, then returned to scene but did not transport again. GEMS 102 transported 2 minor injured to Greenville.

The notes above were sent to GEMS for review. They sent back following on June 28, 2021:

To clarify EMS (Ambulance units). The EMS units on scene were: GEMS Ambulance 2 Advanced Life Support units, Greenville Fire Department 2 Advanced Life Support units, Haynes Ambulance and Care Ambulance-unknown number of units responded. Unknown if these units were staffed ALS or BLS, but two (2) units were carrying life flight crews. (Lifesaver and Lifeflight were put on standby but due to weather could not fly). Fire units that responded to the scene were: Greenville Fire Department, Liberty VFD, Central VFD, Shackleville VFD and Searcy VFD. (These agencies are all located in Butler County). From Lowndes County, Fort Deposit VFD, Sandy Ridge VFD, Pintlala VFD and Burkeville VFD. Montgomery Heavy Rescue responded from Montgomery AL and assisted with body removal from van. Benjamin Faulkenberry, funeral director Dunklin Daniels Funeral Home Greenville AL responded to scene with body bags and assisted with the body removal. All other information appears to be correct.

## 2 Baptist South staff

Tom Barth and Turan Kayagil of NTSB spoke with Sylvia Thompson, Assistant Director ED and Cindy Murphy, Director of ED Trauma and Critical Care on June 23, 2021 at Baptist South.

- Hospital was notified of the event by Haynes medic, who called the charge nurse and informed them of a large scale incident
- Charge nurse notified the house supervisor and OR. At the news, they discharged any patients they could, called in the management team, and notified staff.
- Jim Goodrow from Haynes sent a triage team to the scene, and ambulances from Haynes and CARE (both owned by Haynes) were sent
- Goodrow spoke to responders about the numbers of potential patients.
- Hospital did not get information from fire/rescue responders at the scene
- Sylvia called TCC (the trauma hotline database) for information and to report their status.
- TCC [REDACTED] and admin [REDACTED]) is run by UAB
- Green went to Jackson – thinks they got about 6
- They have 15 bays and prepped them
- Called in a counselor to support families
- Patients were asking about other victims – they held off – waiting for scene to establish a proper notification
- If they didn't have such a strong relationship with their EMS community, it would have been much more difficult. They relied on these relationships for info.
- They have quarterly meetings with regional EMS agencies.
- They monitor the Montgomery Fire Dispatch
- They reported their status to TCC, and remained green throughout, had plenty of capacity
- Cindy Murphy noted they do a lot of gunshot victims so have deep trauma resources.
- Have 5 standard bays and can be up to 15 bays using their fast track system with curtained bays.
- Received 10 total, 2 were admitted, 8 were treated and released
- Provided contact point for Jackson
- Air EMS crews were from Wetumpka and Troy, can get info from Joe Powell at Wetumpka Haynes Life Flight.

### **3 Hayle Morgan**

Interview conducted on June 23, 2021 at Baptist Medical Center South. The interview was recorded and transcribed.

NTSB: Thomas Barth

NTSB: Turan Kayagil

Driver of the Ford Explorer: Hayle Morgan

Others in Room: Driver's father and driver's mother

The NTSB provide some background information and asked if she consented to recording the interview, which she did. Refer to the separate document "Driver of the Ford Explorer Interview Transcript".

### **4 James and Katelyn Whited, Driver and passenger of the grey 2017 Kia Sedona**

Interviewed by phone with Tom Barth (NTSB) and Corporal Glen Furakawa (ALEA) on June 23, 2021.

Interview summarized as follows:

- Described where everyone was seated, and noted that everyone was belted and the children were in child seats.
- Asked to describe the incident, he remembered a Ford pickup in front of them put on the brake lights. He thought the Ford hit something, but was not sure.
- He slid into the Ford, then got hit in the rear by another car.
- They then got hit a second time, much harder.
- Everyone got out of the car and saw his sister's SUV upside down.
- They helped get his sister out and then went around to check on her husband, but was unable to get him out.
- He sat with the children while his sister was treated and transported with a back injury.
- Katelyn suffered a neck injury and was transferred to Jackson, Ms. Morgan's 5 year old was taken to Baptist South to be with his mother (was not injured)
- The children were checked over by a medic. One boy was not injured, the other had bruises and scratches; Malana (mother of James) had a bruise on left chest. They went with church and then were taken to Greenville just for a checkup.

### **5 Chief Auckie and FF Foster of Liberty VFD, FF Springer from Shackleville VFD**

Tom Barth NTSB spoke with two members of the Liberty VFD on June 23, 2021 at the Butler County EMA.

- Liberty VFD responded with truck 1, which is a tanker. The truck normally staffs 5 on the truck.
- When they arrived, there were 2 guys (bystanders who were FF) helping GFD operate the hoses. They assumed the role of supporting the fire effort.

- One of the staff helped with the Ford SUV. A man was belted into the overturned vehicle in the front passenger seat, and was deemed not viable.
- The fire chief arrived separately in his private vehicle. Upon arrival, he discussed the response with GFD and the need for water resources.
- FF Darron Springer from Shackleville VFD responded with Engine 3, which was staffed by 2 on the truck and another responded in a private vehicle. They provided water support and working the water lines with GFD.

**6 Mr. Whigham (Church that helped with response)**

**RECORD OF CONVERSATION**

NTSB: Turan Kayagil, MD, FACEP, Medical Officer

Date: June 23, 2021 (20:18 local time)

Person Interviewed: Mr. Paul Martin (“Marty”) Whigham, Sr., Shackleville Volunteer Fire Department (phone interview only)

Narrative according to interviewee:

Mr. Whigham is a member of the Shackleville Volunteer Fire Department, and was dispatched to the crash by 911 at 15:09 local time, with a 2000-gallon tanker truck to provide water for firefighting. The Shackleville Fire Chief was with him. They arrived on scene at 15:32. At that time there were already multiple other first responder entities present, and the fire was only smoldering. Mr. Whigham described that the forward-most crash vehicles were a short distance past the bridge on I-65 N, including a pickup truck that was in the median pointing south, an 18-wheeler that was partly off the road, and possibly another truck. It seemed as if the location of the fire was in that same vicinity. The Liberty Volunteer Fire Department requested that the Shackleville tanker refill their tanker – this was done. Judging how he might then best contribute, Mr. Whigham began to walk the length of the crash distributing numerous beverages that had been on board the Shackleville tanker truck to various persons on scene.

Somewhere around 15:40, Mr. Whigham had an in-person conversation with the Butler County District Attorney Ms. Charlotte Tesmer. They discussed the need to get the uninjured people to a safe place. Mr. Whigham is affiliated with First Baptist Church Greenville (212 Fort Dale Rd, Greenville, AL 36037), and called the Head of Deacons at the Church, Mr. Patrick Skipper, to assist. Mr. Skipper enlisted the help of another member of the Church, Mr. Trent Thompson. Together, Mr. Skipper and Mr. Thompson took upwards of 20 people from the scene of the crash to the church over 2-3 trips each in two of the church vans. Mr. Whigham also called his wife, Ms. Mary Ellen Whigham, who is a registered nurse employed by the State of Alabama – she went to the church to assist, and ended up drawing blood from uninjured drivers at the request of State Troopers (three of whom were present at the church). None of the people who arrived to the church were injured, although one was covered in broken glass that needed to be cleaned off. Nobody needed to be transported to the hospital from the church, although it seemed that more people were arriving to the church who had left the hospital. The church took people in the church vans to local hotels including the Hampton Inn and Holiday Inn Express. Although Ms. Whigham did not draw

blood from any injured drivers, Mr. Whigham believes that there were other personnel who drew blood on some drivers at the scene, because one driver at the church stated that he had already had his blood drawn. Mr. Whigham does not have a list of the people who were transported to the church, although he thinks the State Troopers should have a list of the drivers who had blood drawn.

Mr. Whigham and his Fire Chief left the scene at one point to drive the tanker truck to Exit 130 to be refueled at Chevron and refilled with water. While that was happening, Mr. Whigham noted that traffic was still flowing north, bound to back up from where traffic was stopped at the crash. Mr. Whigham called 911 to recommend that northbound traffic be diverted by police at Exit 130. Mr. Whigham and his Fire Chief then picked up more beverages from Chevron and Walmart and returned to the scene, where Mr. Whigham resumed distributing beverages. They went 10-8 (available/in-service) at 20:44 and drove to the church. They left the church at 23:27 after all the people there had been dispersed.

Asked for suggestions on aspects of the response that could have been improved, Mr. Whigham states that it could have been helpful for the flow of traffic to have been stopped at the exit prior to the crash location, as some of the backed-up vehicles were crossing the median to turn southbound, which created a potential hazard for emergency vehicles and other southbound traffic. He also states that it could have been helpful to have a way of knowing/marketing which drivers had already had blood drawn at the scene for purposes of coordinating blood draws at the church.

Mr. Whigham expressed that he and Ms. Whigham could both be contacted by NTSB for further information if needed.

## **7 Kimberli Weaver Greenville Regional Medical Center**

Tom Barth and Turan Kayagil spoke with Kimberli Weaver at GRMC on June 24, 2021.

- Patients arrived by private vehicle or by the church bus, no EMS
- They picked up the incident on the GFD scanner, the attending physician called in management
- They put other staff on standby and cleared out existing patients
- They do not have a trauma surgeon on call, but notified them
- They are a level 3 trauma center and have 9 bays
- They participate in TCC, and TCC will help with patient transfers if that patient is entered into the system (the patients from this were probably not)
- They do 2 live training exercises each year with the Butler County EMA, they also do training with AL Dept. of Public Health – region 10, meet quarterly.
- Are also part of the AIMS (Alabama Incident Mgt System)- and have to report Covid stats
- The last training exercise they did was a commercial bus crash and a hostage at the airport run concurrently.
- Part of the Joint Commission of Accredited Healthcare Workers

- Heard that Jackson got 4 total and 2 children were sent to UA Birmingham Children's Hospital

## **8 Greenville Fire Department**

NTSB: Thomas Barth

Group meeting and interview with Greenville Fire Department:

E42: Captain Parker (medic), Sergeant Alford (EMT)

Unit 36: Captain Norman (medic), FF Middleton (EMT)

Unit 39: FF Hilliard (medic), FF Anderson (EMT)

E33: Battalion Chief Sullivan (EMT), Captain Pouncey (Medic)

Chief Warrick facilitated a meeting and group interview with the responders of the crash at Station 2 of the Greenville Fire Department, located at 349 Greenfield Bypass Rd, Greenville AL, on June 25, 2021. A request to record the interview was declined.

These interview notes were reviewed by Chief Warrick and an edited version was returned on July 6<sup>th</sup>, 2021.

The responders were asked to describe their response. The list above has the responding units and staff in order of their arrival on scene. Staff from Engine 42 noted that on approach to the scene a very large column of black smoke was visible from miles away. Seeing that this plume of smoke was so large, Cpt Parker requested additional resources including water support while still enroute to the scene. E42 has a capacity of 750 gallons. He specifically requested the help of Liberty VFD and Ft. Deposit VFD due to their proximity and because of their water resources. They noted that radio reception in the area is spotty. He called Cpt Norman on his cell phone and informed him to self dispatch the GFD EMS, wanting them to support, not being sure when they would be dispatched because they are outside of the service area for this crash. Butler County E911 had already dispatched GEMS, but due to apparent size of the crash, he wanted to be sure there was more EMS support. E42 was one of the first responders to arriving, the crew remembered seeing only one Sheriff unit already at the scene other than themselves. They described it as a massive and hot fire. The vehicles were fully engulfed in flame and it was not possible to distinguish between vehicles at that point. There were a couple of bystanders that were nurses. His quick assessment estimated that there were about 10 to 15 people needing emergency transport. He noted there was a victim trapped and deceased in one vehicle. While completing this assessment GEMS had arrived and the medic from GEMS had started to attend to the 9-month-old who had been removed from the same vehicle with the trapped and deceased victim. Soon after, U36 arrived on-scene.

When U36 arrived, they found that GEMS was treating the 9-month-old and fire operations were ongoing. E42 had run out of water and had to wait some period of time for the Liberty VFD to arrive (the dispatch log noted the Liberty VFD arrival as 4:48). Norman spoke with Parker, and Norman took over the triage of wounded. He moved through the spread out crown and saw several walking wounded. He asked those with minor injuries to find a safe area and wait for help while they attended to more critical patients. His assessment found only 2 critical patients, the driver of the van and the driver of the other vehicle with the entrapped deceased victim. The driver of the van was very far north of the fire, it appeared she had been driven some distance away,

based on the distance and her injuries and the opportunity to move her. Unit 39 had arrived not long after, and crossed over to the south lanes in order to move north past the fire. They then crossed back over to the northbound lanes in come in close proximity to the injured driver of the van. Unit 39 loaded the driver of the van and based on her injuries, transported her north to the nearest trauma center, which was Baptist South in Montgomery, rather than taking her to Greenville Regional. Unit 39 noted difficulty navigating through traffic due to motorists ignoring road closures or turning around on the emergency crossovers in order to leave the scene. This created difficulty for emergency vehicles, either by encountering traffic going the wrong direction, or encountering oncoming traffic while they were traveling the wrong way on a closed section of road. It was noted that there were not enough law enforcement vehicles to properly close off the scene and emergency crossovers. The group wondered if there was a way to leave a law enforcement vehicle blocking the emergency crossovers to stop motorists from using them. It was also acknowledged that the AL State Patrol is further away and can not get to the scene as quickly as the Sherriff department or other local law enforcement.

The fire operation was discussed. They noted that fire was very intense and was more difficult to knock down than expected, indicating that there was a lot of fuel involved. It was noted that the semi truck contained tools, including a large number of pick-axes with fiberglass handles. The resin of the handles contributed to the fuel load of the fire. They started with water, and then used a foam mixture with approximately 3% foam. They noted that in all, they used ten containers of foam, each container having 5 gallons of foam. They noted that the water trucks refilled a number of times. The Liberty VFD truck holds 1,000 gallons, the Searcy truck hold 1,000 gallons, E33 has 750 gallons, and the Shackleville tanker has 2,500 gallons.

Dispatch and jurisdictions were discussed. All law enforcement and fire services in Butler County are dispatched by Butler County E911. Agencies outside of Butler County were Ft. Deposit, which is in Lowndes County, just north of the crash site, and Montgomery Fire and Rescue. The Lowndes County line is at mile marker 139. The Greenville FD response area on I-65 is MM 138 to 121, the Greenville city limits. But because the agencies that have areas further south on I-65 have to go through Greenville to access the highway south of mm131, the GFD routinely responds to I-65 crashes as far south as mm 121, because they can get there faster. Searcy VFD is just North of Greenville.

The radio systems were discussed. GFD recently switched to a digital radio system (May 1<sup>st</sup>). It's been going OK, but there are some bugs to work out. Reception of the digital system seems to have some of the same problems as the analog. Low lying areas can have poor reception. The GFD digital system can hear the VFD analog systems, but the VFDs can not hear the digital. The VFDs remain analog due to budget issues. Cell phone reception is also poor in some areas. Additionally, the crash appears to have overloaded the cell tower capacity, as some responders noted that making cell phone calls was difficult. The option of using Firstnet was discussed, and some responders use it.

Discussion of the EMS continued. It was noted that the CAD log shows some inaccuracies in the order of unit arrivals. It was noted that GFD unit 36 was the first EMS to arrive, followed by GFD unit 39, then GEMS unit 101, and then GEMS unit 103 arrived just as unit 39 was leaving the scene, transporting the van driver. GFD unit 36 remained on-scene coordinating the response, and



did not transport any victims. A Haynes EMS supervisor arrived (in a supervisor vehicle) just before the other EMS agencies arrived (Haynes and CARE). The Haynes supervisor coordinated with Cpt Norman for transporting the rest of the victims from the scene.

The role of Truck 33 provided water and, manpower, and they assisted in coordination the extrication of deceased. Liberty VFD extricated the deceased entrapped victim in the Ford Explorer. Montgomery Heavy Rescue extricated the deceased from the van. It was noted that one of the bystander fire fighters from Ohio pulled the driver from the van. It was noted that this vehicle with these FF from Ohio was one of the first vehicles to stop right behind the crash. They did not know the identity of these bystanders, but they were driving a blue or green Chevy crew cab pickup, which can be seen in scene photos parked behind E33.

## **9 Driver and Front Passenger of the Pacifica**

NTSB: Thomas Barth  
Eric Estep, Driver of the Pacifica  
Shannon Estep, right front passenger  
June 26, 2021 at Till's Towing

The driver and his wife were at the tow yard to collect personal items from their vehicle. I was able to ask a few questions given limited time as they had family waiting.

I asked to confirm the seating location of occupants in the vehicle. They responded that Eric was driving, Shannon was in the right front passenger seat, their 15 year-old daughter was in row 2 left side, a 15 year-old girl was in row 2 on the right side, and the 4 year-old boy was in row 3 right side. Luke was in a forward facing child seat, he's 4 years old. Everyone else was wearing their seatbelt. They stated that there were no serious injuries. After the crash they were assessed quickly by a medic on scene, then went to the church in a van, the driver voluntarily provided a blood sample. The church then drove them to Greenville Regional, where they were assessed. They suffered minor bruises and scrapes. They were released. They were asked to describe vehicles around them and the lead up to the crash. Eric noted that they were one or two cars behind the car hauler and in the lane to the right of the car hauler. Traffic was heavy, but not stop and go. When cars started to slam on the brakes he saw the semi truck attempting to stop and maneuver to avoid hitting other cars, he was not sure but thought it moved toward the left. He was trying not to hit the car in front of him, which he thought was white, but was not sure. He did not see what the car hauler did before the crash. He did not recall the sequence of events, but knows that they ended up facing south, and were next to the aft portion of the car hauler (visible on overhead photos posted in the news).

## **10 Driver and Front Passenger of the Acura**

Several attempts to reach the Acura Driver failed, until the following text message was received on September 14, 2021:

September 14, 2021 Barth to Summers

I'm just now seeing this message. I apologize, I actually thought it was a text from cashapp because of the area code. Jennifer's number is xxx.xxx.xxxx. I have to be at work at 4 so I'm

getting ready, but I can call once I get there if it's a good time for you. I apologize for the delayed reaction. I just ran across this text.

Further attempts to reach Ms. Summers by text on September 15, September 18, September 27 were unsuccessful.

Investigator Barth obtained the name of the Acura front passenger from the driver. The passenger was Jennifer Richey, [REDACTED]. Investigator Barth texted her on September 18, 2021 and Ms. Richey responded with a text on September 19, 2021. The content of the texts are provided below, with corrections on misspellings and edited for grammar.

September 18, 2021 Barth to Richey

Hello Ms. Richey, I got your number from Ms. Summers. I'm an investigator with the National Transportation Safety Board. We are looking at the crash in Greenville. We make recommendations on improving transportation safety. I'd like to do a quick interview with you. Basically, I'd like to ask what you remember about the various vehicles (who was in front of you etc.), and about your injuries. Let me know an email and I can send you info on who I am and about our investigation. Also, if there is a convenient time next week for us to talk on the phone. Thanks, Tom Barth

September 19, 2021 Richey to Barth

There was a maroon van that had come to a complete stop in front of us. It was raining and kind of foggy. We just passed a yellow diesel truck and a black car was behind us, and the diesel was beside it. We saw the van, slammed on our brakes, the black car hit us. The diesel tried to miss us but he couldn't. It was a chain reaction, but it was not the yellow diesel truck's fault. The wreck had already happened in front of us. I got glass in my legs and my eye. We were trapped underneath the other black car. I have damage to my back and my neck, but the most damage is having to hear the kids burn up. And there was nothing we could do. The car we were in, I believe it saved our lives. It had the best safety features. The only airbag that didn't deploy was my airbag and the dash, and deployed out under the hood.