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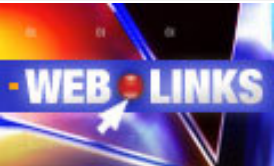
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Posted at: 02/19/2008 01:18:32 AM
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 By: Lila Carney
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First responders cope with tragic crash



In the hours after a tragic crash, first responders start to deal with the reality that two small children died and there was nothing they could do about it.

"We had helicopters. We had jaws. We had three ambulances and we were there within moments of the call coming in. But it didn't make any difference." Chief John Durand of the Byron Police Department said.

When they got to the scene of Monday morning's crash, they say their mind went on autopilot and their training took over.

"Its a drive inside of you that you know you're doing the best thing for the family, the community, and you just keep going. It's ultimately the best thing for you, too, is to work through it," said EMT Wendy Hilbert who responded to the crash.

When the crash takes young lives, first responders admit its hard to keep it together.

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"You're not made of stone" Hilbert said. "You're flesh and blood. You do break down, but you realize you've got a job to do and you're going to do it and you get through it."

After its all over, they start to think about their connection to the young victims.

"This case I have a son who goes to school with him." Hilbert continued, "You start to see you're own family. Its tough."

All the emergency workers who responded will go to a debriefing session where they will have access to counselors.

"The psychological problems you get doing this, when you wake up at 3am for six nights, ten nights, twelve nights in a row with this turning over in your mind, it makes life very difficult." Durand says

The members of the department have each other to help them get through this first difficult night.

Hilbert said, "You sit and talk about it, you decompress you built onto other peoples experiences and thoughts."

The fire chief says this is the type of crash where some volunteers are so affected, they decide to stop volunteering. The hope is Tuesday's debriefing will help them cope with it and they stay with the department.

The fire department says it responded to that intersection along Route 262, seven times last year for accidents.

The school district says there will be counselors at the Byron-Bergen Elementary and Middle school Tuesday afternoon at 1pm.



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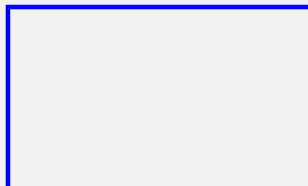
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