

Four Omaha firefighters, SUV driver injured in - Omaha World-Herald: Web Edition Articles (NE) - June 23, 2016

June 23, 2016 | Omaha World-Herald: Web Edition Articles (NE) | Jay Withrow / World-Herald staff writer

Four Omaha firefighters and a motorist suffered minor injuries Wednesday in a collision between a firetruck and an SUV in downtown Omaha that sent the firetruck careening into an art **gallery**.

The crash occurred at about 10:35 a.m. at 16th and Leavenworth Streets. A northbound firetruck, its lights flashing and siren blaring, collided with an eastbound Chevrolet Avalanche, said Omahan Mark Piner, 48, who witnessed the crash.

The firetruck struck the Chevy's passenger side, heavily damaging the SUV and sending it into the parking lot of **Gallery 1516**, Piner said.

The firetruck, too, careened into the parking lot, then punched through a wall of the **gallery** building, which is on the northeast corner of 16th and Leavenworth.

Piner said an ambulance, also with lights and siren on, had made it through the intersection unscathed about 100 yards ahead of the firetruck.

"I pulled over when I heard the siren and saw the lights," Piner said. "And then this Chevy Avalanche just flies into the intersection."

The firefighters and the SUV's driver, 40-year-old Jason Sauvain of Council Bluffs, were taken to Creighton University Medical Center with injuries, Battalion Chief Tim McCaw said. Police later said the injuries all were minor.

"The first thing the firefighters did was get out of their truck and render aid to the SUV driver," McCaw said.

Scattered in the parking lot after the crash were bumpers, floor mats, broken glass and the SUV's windshield.

Pat Drickey, owner of **Gallery 1516**, said he was alone in the **gallery** when the crash occurred but wasn't injured.

"I've had better days," he said.

Drickey, 67, said the **gallery**, a nonprofit venue dedicated to exhibiting the works of Nebraska and regional artists, was remodeled in October. The 20-stall parking lot was resurfaced and striped Tuesday.

"It was such a surprise," he said of the noisy collision. "I was in my office, and I heard the sirens,

then a crash and then a second crash. I looked up and saw a firetruck in the building."

Before pulling the firetruck out of the building, City of Omaha engineers checked the **gallery's** structural integrity, McCaw said.

"We periodically have some of our vehicles involved in accidents," McCaw said, "but I've never heard of a firetruck" striking a building.

Steve LeClair, president of the Omaha fire union, said he was proud of the firefighters who provided care to the SUV driver in spite of their own injuries. LeClair praised their "selflessness, heart and determination."

"We are hopeful that everyone involved in today's accident will make a full and timely recovery," he said in a prepared statement.

Drickey, the **gallery** owner, took the crash and damage in stride.

"It was just a bump in the road," he said.

Police closed 16th Street for one block north and one block south of Leavenworth. Likewise, Leavenworth was closed for a half-block to the west and about a block to the east while the crash was investigated.

Contact the writer: 402-444-1259, jay.withrow@owh.com

That's not going to buff out. Avoid 16/Leavenworth while this crash is being investigated. #OPD pic.twitter.com/KGNCFQNaNJ— Ofc. Ryan Miller (@OPDOfcMiller) June 22, 2016

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