

12

© THE GILBERT REPUBLIC

## CRASHES Vehicles unsafe

Continued from page 1

frequently inspect trucks and trailers for safety violations, said Lt. Kenny Buckland, who oversees the Police Department's traffic units.

He said it's difficult to tell whether violations are increasing, but Buckland emphasized that driving unsafe trucks or pulling unsecured trailers is a game of chance that can have serious consequences.

Officers ask follow-up questions when they find violations.

"We want to find out why they're doing what they're doing and correct that behavior," Buckland said.

The police department's goal, he said, is to reduce the number of commercial vehicles with safety violations driving on Gilbert streets.

"There's a lot of it out there, so it's going to take a lot of work," Buckland said.

In Pinal County, Ironwood Road northeast of Queen Creek has been a particularly treacherous two-lane stretch.

Last month, Queen Creek resident Darci Kim Linville, 19, died in an early-morning crash when the driver of a truck pulling a trailer of construction equipment lost control and hit her vehicle head-on at about 6 a.m., police said.

In August, another early-morning, head-on collision on Ironwood killed two Queen Creek men three miles north of Germann Road, just north of where Linville died, according to the Pinal County Sheriff's Office.

"It's an extremely busy, heavily traveled road," said Lt. Harry Grizzle of the Sheriff's Office.

He said deputies are being overtaxed by the massive traffic problems in the area, which are generated by a booming population with too few roads

that don't have enough lanes.

He said commercial vehicle traffic has increased in Pinal County, including trucks carrying consumer goods and construction supplies.

But the Pinal Sheriff's Office has been awarded a federal grant that will pay the salary of seven deputies to perform commercial-vehicle inspections full time. Their work will likely focus mostly on state highways and interstate traffic, but enforcement areas will also be complaint-driven, Grizzle said.

The danger is not limited to the roadways.

In Gilbert last month, a trailer carrying a front-end loader broke loose from a truck after going over railroad tracks, police said. It crashed through the bedroom where a 44-year-old man was sleeping and nearly crushed him, but he escaped with minor injuries, police said.

Police cited the driver of the truck on suspicion of endangerment and improperly inspecting the truck and trailer, Buckland said.

### Road danger

Commercial vehicles and trucks pulling trailers have caused three major traffic crashes in Gilbert and western Pinal County since Sept. 14, a trend that punctuates the dangers such vehicles can pose.

**Sept. 21:** A 44-year-old man was nearly crushed when a trailer carrying a front-end loader burst through the wall of the bedroom where he was sleeping on the floor. He received minor injuries. The trailer had been attached to a dump truck but apparently jolted loose after going over railroad tracks. The trailer swerved across the road and crashed into the house shortly after 6 a.m.

**Sept. 23:** A large truck equipped with a crane barreled into a line of traffic on Germann Road during morning rush hour. The 33-year-old driver of the truck was arrested on suspicion of driving under the influence of drugs. The collision damaged four vehicles sitting in westbound traffic, seriously injured two people and shut down traffic on Germann until late afternoon.

**Sept. 14:** A 19-year-old Queen Creek woman died in an early morning crash on Ironwood Road in Pinal County. Darci Kim Linville was northbound when a southbound truck pulling a trailer of construction equipment lost control and hit Linville's vehicle head-on at 6:10 a.m., police said.

Source: Gilbert Police and Pinal County Sheriff's Office.

CARLOS ESPINOSA/THE REPUBLIC

### Crash cases

#### Status of Gilbert traffic cases reviewed by the Maricopa County Attorney's Office:

- The County Attorney's Office has chosen to not press criminal charges against 31-year-old Angel Rocha Pantoja in the death of 21-year-old Rick E. Smith, according to Gilbert police. Smith, a Gilbert resident, died in April when Pantoja ran a red light and crashed into Smith's car at Williams Field Road and Val Vista Drive, police said. Pantoja was cited for two civil traffic violations: failure to stop for a red light and driving without an Arizona driver's license.
- The County Attorney's Office has yet to decide whether to press charges in the death in March of 8-year-old Henry Enrique Bega of Queen Creek, according to Gilbert police. Henry died when a trailer detached from a commercial truck and veered into oncoming traffic before colliding with the car his mother was driving in Gilbert. A Gilbert police report says that the trailer hitch had "loose and worn parts" and that the trailer's brakes were not set up to automatically activate in case it broke loose, as required by law. Two weeks before Henry's death in Gilbert, Mesa police found safety violations with the trailer's brake system and ordered it fixed, according to police.
- Gilbert investigators recommended that charges be brought against the trailer's owner, Gary L. Moore, 55, of Queen Creek, and the truck's driver, Omar Antelo Ochoa, 29. The County Attorney's Office has requested the medical examiner's report on Henry's death and is still reviewing the case, police said.

# Dangerous Trailers.Org 8 Year Old Killed By A Loose Trailer Back In 2005 And No Action, But They Try

Dangerous Trailers.Org 8 Year Old Killed By A Loose Trailer Back In 2005 And No Action, But They Try And Destroy Our Cause? Part Two...Instead of Addressing Unsafe Trailers They Go After Me....Arizona Republic 20 October 2005

Clipped By:



dusterrm1

Thu, Jan 26, 2017

