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Man dies in I-20 wreck

Tractor-trailer strikes asphalt spreader along roadway in McDuffie County; second worker hurt

Web posted July 29, 2000

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By [Mark Mathis](#)
 Staff Writer

One man was killed and one was seriously injured Friday at a state Department of Transportation work site on Interstate 20 in McDuffie County when a tractor-trailer struck an asphalt spreader and flipped on top of it.

Kenneth Kitchens, 31, of Thomson, was pronounced dead at the scene on I-20 east, one mile from the U.S. Highway 78 exit. Mr. Kitchens and Willie Douglas, 55, of Harlem, were working along the highway smoothing asphalt when the truck hit them, said Jilayne Jordan, spokeswoman for the Georgia DOT.

The two men worked for the company contracted for the project, Thomson-based Reeves Construction, Ms. Jordan said.

At about 12:30 p.m., Walter Larnerd, 53, of Cookeville, Tenn., who works for Bridge Terminal Transport Inc., was driving through the one-lane work zone in his tractor-trailer, Ms. Jordan said. The truck struck the asphalt spreader, jackknifed and flipped onto the work vehicle, which is about the size of an Army Humvee, Ms. Jordan said.

“I don't even think they saw it coming because it was behind



Motorists slow down as officials survey an accident scene in which an asphalt spreader was hit by a tractor-trailer Friday afternoon on I-20.

CHRIS THELEN/STAFF

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them," she said. ``They were still in the cab and didn't have much time to react."

Mr. Larnerd, who was en route to Charleston, S.C., was not injured. Mr. Douglas is being treated at McDuffie Regional Hospital.

The injuries are the first reported at the McDuffie County site in at least the past year and a half, Ms. Jordan said.

Friday's accident comes during a 4-month-old campaign by the DOT that warns drivers to exercise caution and drive slower when going through a roadwork site, she said.

``The message is important not only to employees, but to all people who drive in Georgia," Ms. Jordan said. Although the majority of roadwork site accidents in Georgia injure motorists, the DOT has tried to inform residents that driving through the areas at high speed also places workers in danger.

``The analogy we use is that if you were sitting at your desk working on a computer, you wouldn't want cars going by you at 90 mph," Ms. Jordan said.

Charges are pending against Mr. Larnerd, according to the Georgia State Patrol.

Staff Writer Johnny Edwards contributed to this article.

Reach [Mark Mathis](#) at (706) 823-3227 or marmathis@yahoo.com.



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