Beat: Automobiles

Thick fog causes 130-car pileup in southwest England, injuring 68

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USPA News - Nearly 70 people were injured Thursday when more than 100 vehicles were involved in a massive pile-up on a bridge engulfed in thick fog in southwest England, emergency services said, adding that eight of those suffered serious injuries. The accident happened at approximately 7:15 a.m. local time when thick fog hovered over the Sheppey Crossing, which carries the A249 road across The Swale.

The collisions continued for about 10 minutes as cars and trucks continued to crash into each other, causing the country`s largest pile-up in years. Kent Police said more than 100 vehicles were involved in the collision, but witnesses at the scene put the number of vehicles at around 130. It prompted one of the largest ever emergencies responses for the South East Coast Ambulance Service, which dispatched more than 30 vehicles. Ambulance clinicians, working with the Kent Fire and Rescue Service, assessed more than 200 people following the pile-up. A total of 68 people were injured, including 35 people who were transported to hospitals across the region, and at least eight of them were said to have suffered serious injuries. The other people assessed by emergency workers were either treated for very minor injuries or were given advice should symptoms develop in the coming days. The scene was described as "horrendous," with tangled cars and lorries strewn across the road, but officials said it was a "miracle" no one had been killed. "Firefighters have used hydraulic cutting equipment to release six people from their vehicles," said a spokesperson for Kent Fire and Rescue Service, which dispatched seven fire engines and a command support unit. The A249 bridge was closed for more than ten hours and re-opened at approximately 5:30 p.m. local time. "The scale of this incident made our response very challenging," said Chris Stamp, who is the ambulance service`s senior operations manager for the area and oversaw Thursday`s ambulance response. "As a result and with the support of our colleagues in the police and fire service, our staff worked extremely well assessing and treating patients as swiftly as possible." Kent Police Chief Inspector Andy Reeves, who coordinated the recovery operation from the scene, thanked motorists and members of the public for their patience and said he was "thoroughly impressed" by people who brought bottles of water and food to the scene. "Today was a long and intense day for everybody," he said. "I would like to thank everybody for their support." Reeves said investigators were still working to establish the exact cause of Thursday`s accident. He said all vehicles involved in the collision were removed from the scene by Kent Police and are being held in a secure location, where owners will be able to collect them at a late date. Thursday`s pile-up was the largest in England since November 2011, when 34 vehicles were involved in a collision on the M5 motorway in Somerset. That accident left seven people dead and 51 others injured, making it Britain`s deadliest road accident since 7 people died in a collision on the M56 in July 2003.

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Editorial program service of General News Agency:
United Press Association, Inc.
3651 Lindell Road, Suite D168

Las Vegas, NV 89103, USA
(702) 943.0321 Local
(702) 943.0233 Facsimile
info@unitedpressassociation.org
info@gna24.com
www.gna24.com