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Tragedy in a Crosswalk

By Cathy Tyson



Makeshift memorial for the deceased at the corner of El Nido Ranch Road and Upper Happy Valley Road. Photo Cathy Tyson

An elderly woman from Pleasant Hill was struck and died June 17 at El Nido Road and Upper Happy Valley Road in the middle of the afternoon by a dump truck driver who didn't see her. The driver was shaken and upset when taken in for questioning by police; he fully cooperated and had no signs of drug or alcohol impairment, or use of a cell phone at the time of the accident. The deceased was well known in the area, with grown children and grandchildren living in Lamorinda.

"This accident was likely the result of the driver not seeing the pedestrian," said Lafayette Police Chief Eric Christensen. "At the time the truck stopped, there was another vehicle at the intersection. The truck came to a stop at the stop sign and the driver of the dump truck looked at the other driver. The truck driver then likely shifted his vision to going straight, not realizing that the pedestrian had crossed in front of him. The pedestrian likely believed that the driver saw her because he was stopped for the time that he was, not realizing that he was looking at another driver."

To prevent this type of collision, the chief suggests it's best to make sure that you have the attention of the driver, "your eyes connecting with their eyes," before entering the crosswalk. He adds when crossing directly in front of large commercial vehicles, it may be better not to enter the crosswalk until the commercial vehicle has cleared the intersection.

This is Lafayette's first and hopefully only fatal collision this year. There were vehicle versus pedestrian accidents in 2012 and 2013, but no fatalities. The police department offers the service of chaplains for witnesses of the incident; they will be recognized for their efforts on this case and others at a date not yet determined.

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