

# The Anniston Star

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## Three dead, one hospitalized in two-vehicle accident near Anniston



Emergency crews wheel a man to an ambulance after, authorities say, he stole and then crashed into another vehicle killing all three occupants.

Kirsten Fiscus/The Anniston Star

By Kirsten Fiscus, Star Staff Writer, [kfiscus@annistonstar.com](mailto:kfiscus@annistonstar.com) Sep 27, 2016

Three women were killed Tuesday after a man, fleeing a Calhoun County sheriff's deputy, drove a stolen truck over the centerline of Old Gadsden Highway and struck their car, officials said Tuesday.

Calhoun County Coroner Pat Brown by phone identified Joy Howell, 74, of Anniston; Melanie Trantham, 43, of Anniston; and Melanie Hurst, 39, of Wellborn, as the three killed in the accident. Howell and Trantham were mother and daughter, Brown said.

The driver of the truck passed a deputy in the opposite lane of traffic, running a red light, on Noble Street, according to Chief Deputy Matthew Wade of the Calhoun County Sheriff's Office. Wade said the suspect was speeding down Old Gadsden Highway and lost control at a curve near the intersection with Alexandria Road.

According to an Alabama State Troopers news release, the driver of the stolen truck was Jordan Stewart Baker, 20, of Ohatchee. The collision with the 2006 Honda Civic that Hurst was driving occurred at 2:30 p.m., the release stated.

"He struck a vehicle carrying three people," Wade said. "None of them made it."

The suspect became trapped in the truck and the vehicle caught on fire, the chief deputy said.

"Each deputy carries a fire extinguisher in their cars and he was able to hold the fire away from the suspect until other deputies and fire department got here," he said.

Wade said local police and deputies were familiar with the suspect.

"This person had contact with law enforcement yesterday and was carried to the hospital," Wade said. "Today he left the hospital, tried to break into a house in Anniston and stole the vehicle. We don't know what all the issues are with this person and if there is anything else going on."

An emergency services worker held an IV bag high in the air as he stood next to the truck, a 1990 Ford Ranger, with Baker still inside around 3:15 p.m. Anniston firefighters used machinery to break pieces of the truck apart to get Baker out. Anniston EMS took Baker from the scene by ambulance about 20 minutes later and he was later airlifted to UAB Hospital in Birmingham.

State Troopers around 4 p.m. spray-painted marks on the road while tiptoeing around pieces of both vehicles littering the roadway. Wade said State Troopers would handle the investigation because a deputy was involved in the chase that led to the accident.

"We have dash camera footage that we will review and we will cooperate fully," he said.

The deputy was not injured in the crash, Wade said.

Bystander Britney Nicole Alexander said she and her mother were about to pull out onto Saks Road on Tuesday when the deputy's car was driving "came flying down the road."

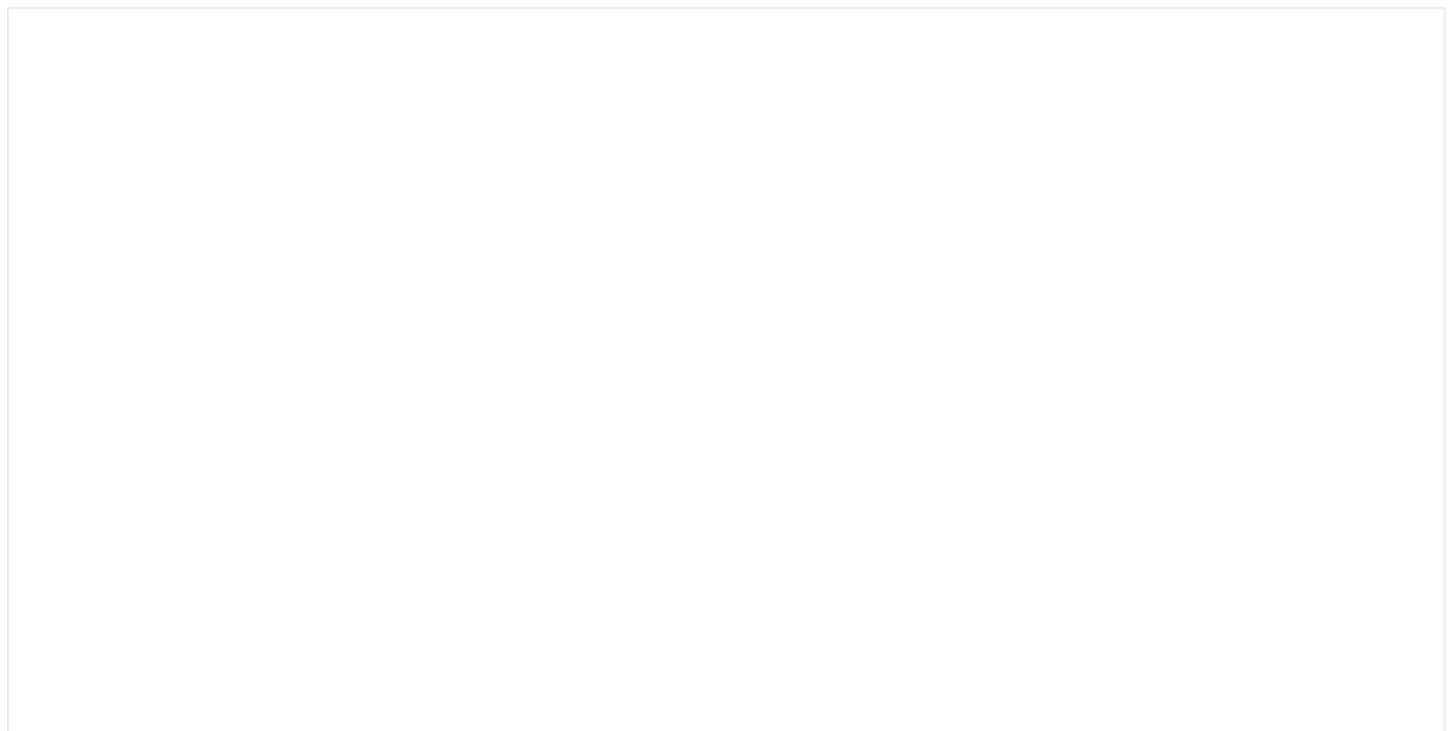
"Mom slammed on her brakes," she said. "We got behind the deputy and I told her he's going to wreck. The

"This curve is a dangerous curve," Alexander said as she stood near yellow tape deputies put up to block the road. "My mom refuses to drive it at night or in the rain."



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Old Gadsden Highway fatal crash  
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Commission approves extra medical care for Ohatchee man jailed after fatal wreck