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WI Department of Corrections Staff Help Save Driver's Life

Corrections Couple on Vacation Are First Responders at Ohio Interstate Crash Scene

MADISON, Wis. – The Ohio State Highway Patrol is crediting two Wisconsin Department of Corrections (DOC) employees for helping save the life of severely injured driver earlier this month while they were traveling through the state on vacation.

On July 7, Paul Van Horn, a Correctional Sergeant at Kettle Moraine Correctional Institution in Sheboygan County, and his wife Karen Van Horn, a Registered Nurse at Oshkosh Correctional Institution, witnessed a tire blow out on a motorcycle trailer being pulled by a pickup truck traveling along Interstate 70. The couple was driving along the Interstate when they saw the blowout cause the driver to lose control of his pickup. The truck veered toward the median, hit the grass and roll several times before landing upright in the median, trapping the driver inside.

The Van Horns immediately pulled over and Karen Van Horn ran toward the vehicle while her husband called 911. Sgt. Van Horn said his wife aided the injured man by applying pressure to a bleeding head injury.

“The injured man was drifting in and out of consciousness as my wife was telling him he had been in an accident, assuring him that she was a nurse and help is on the way and he should not move,” said Sgt. Van Horn. “My wife was adamant he should not be moved when bystanders suggested otherwise.”

Lt. Douglas Eck of the Ohio State Highway Patrol arrived at the crash site and provided latex gloves to Karen Van Horn, who assisted rescue crews with using the Jaws of Life to free the man and helped place the cervical collar on him. The injured motorist was flown by helicopter to a trauma center in Dayton, Ohio.

“We were able to contact the man’s girlfriend several days later at the hospital and were told that doctors told her, due to the type of injury to his spine, any attempt to move him without the cervical collar would have resulted in death, and that the nurse saved his life,” said Sgt. Van Horn.

Sgt. Jeff Kramer of the Ohio State Highway Patrol praised the Van Horn’s actions. “Lt. Eck confirmed that due to the serious nature of this crash the possibility of a spinal injury was

possible,” said Kramer. “The actions of the Van Horns to ensure that the injured driver remained immobile no doubt prevented possible paralysis or death.”

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