

Flames at crash scene too much for rescuers

BY JOAN RANSBERRY
Staff Writer

Despite a valiant rescue attempt by two men, a fiery crash in the community of Vandorf claimed the life of at least one person Wednesday morning.

The Centre for Forensic Science in Toronto has been called upon not only to determine who but how many people died in the crash and fire in the rural Whitchurch-Stouffville community, said York Regional Police Const. Steve Morrell.

"We don't know if one or two people have died in the truck," said Const. Morrell. "This is a difficult case."

A pickup truck travelling westbound on Vandorf Road hit the CN railway bridge abutment at Woodbine Avenue, burst into

flames and exploded, killing at least one occupant, said Whitchurch-Stouffville Fire Chief Bill Brown.

"The truck was a ball of flames when we arrived," said Chief Brown.

Before firefighters or the police responded, Frank Said, owner of JRS Auto Services and a friend, Joe Pignatelli, made a desperate attempt to rescue what they believe to be one occupant from the inferno.



FRANK SAID
Vandorf repair shop owner tried to extinguish fire.

Mr. Said reported that he was at his place of business across from the bridge when he heard a loud impact; it was the truck hitting the railway bridge.

"My friend and I heard the impact. Then we heard the first explosion and then the next two. I called 911, grabbed my three fire extinguishers and ran towards the accident about 200 yards away.

"We tried to help, but the extinguishers were too small. There was nothing we could do. The flames were jumping too high and it was so hot. The smoke was so thick and black. We were forced back by the heat. It was too late. We couldn't help."

"The truck was fully engulfed by the time we arrived," said Chief Brown. "All we could do was stop the trains."

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