



Sheriff Steve Stovall

Stephenson County Sheriff's Office

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MULTIPLE-VEHICLE INJURY CRASH ON ILLINOIS ROUTE 26

On August 27, 2026, at approximately 11:22 a.m., Stephenson County Sheriff's Office personnel responded to Illinois Route 26 North near Winneshiek Road in rural Freeport for a reported multiple-vehicle traffic crash with injuries.

Upon arrival, deputies located the crash scene on Illinois Route 26 just north of Winneshiek Road. The preliminary investigation determined that several vehicles were stopped in the southbound lane due to roadway line-painting operations being conducted by an Illinois Department of Transportation crew.

While traffic was stopped and yielding to the IDOT crew, a southbound semi-tractor and tanker trailer struck the rear of a stopped vehicle. That vehicle was pushed into the vehicle ahead of it, causing both vehicles to leave the roadway and enter a cemetery on the east side of Illinois Route 26.

Before coming to a complete stop, the semi-tractor and tanker trailer struck a third vehicle from behind, pushing it off the roadway and into the ditch on the west side of Illinois Route 26.

The driver of the first vehicle struck had to be extricated by fire department personnel. The drivers of all three passenger vehicles were transported to Mercyhealth Hospital–Freeport for treatment of injuries that were not believed to be life-threatening. The driver of the semi was treated at the scene.

The semi driver, Scott Messina, age 30, of Morris, Illinois, was cited for Failure to Reduce Speed to Avoid an Accident and released with a mandatory court appearance.

Illinois Route 26 was closed near the crash scene for approximately two hours while emergency personnel assisted those involved and the roadway was cleared.

The Stephenson County Sheriff's Office appreciates the assistance provided by the Illinois State Police, Cedarville Fire Protection District, Freeport Rural Fire Department, Leamon's Ambulance Service, and Star Ambulance.

The crash remains under investigation. All individuals are presumed innocent unless proven guilty in a court of law.

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