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13 HURT AS CAR PLOWS INTO SCHOOL BAND

Author: Associated Press

PAWHUSKA, Okla. -- Thirteen students were injured when a car's brakes apparently failed as the vehicle topped a hill and plowed into the 90-member Pawhuska High School marching band, scattering instruments and sheet music, officials said.

One student was hospitalized with a leg injury Tuesday but the other band members were treated and released after the Monday morning accident, said band director John Reber.

"We were crossing the street in front of the high school and an oncoming car plowed right through the middle of us," Reber said.

"I saw kids bouncing to the right and left and some coming over the hood, and what I can't believe is that there were none underneath the car.

"We had somebody looking out for us."

Police Sgt. Howard Crawford said the accident occurred when the brakes of a car driven by Jo Ellen West, 34, of Pawhuska apparently failed as members of the band were crossing the street in front of the school at 8:35 a.m. Monday.

Police Chief John Boone said the band had stopped to let traffic pass before moving across the street. Most of the 90-member band had safely crossed when the station wagon topped a viaduct and hit the students, Boone said.

Boone said citations for driving with a suspended license, careless and inattentive driving and operating a defective vehicle were issued to Ms. West, who was treated for shock at a Pawhuska hospital after the accident.

Boone said Ms. West is scheduled to appear in Pawhuska Municipal Court on Nov. 13.

"Apparently her brakes went out," Crawford said. "After she hit the first band member, she traveled 253 feet before the vehicle came to a final resting place."

Christie Thomas, 15, one of those taken to Pawhuska Hospital with minor injuries, said she did not see the car before it struck her.

"There were instruments flying and people screaming," she said. "It was! just like something out of a movie. "I got three stitches in my lip, a broken tooth, a bruise on my chin and my leg and hip are real sore," she said. "A friend of mine said both our saxophones are kind of bent up."

Hospital Administrator Catherine Frazier said the youngsters sustained mostly bruises and scrapes.

Reber said the band was practicing for the Oklahoma State University homecoming parade in Stillwater on Saturday. He said he expected the band to march in the parade.

"We have quite a few instruments wrecked, which we're going to have fixed today," he said. "But it could have been a lot worse."