



Contributed / Jesse Grabow, Minnesota State Patrol

Two westbound semis crashed Wednesday afternoon, June 4, 2025, on Interstate 94 in Otter Tail County.

Crash sends semi off bridge on I-94 in Otter Tail County

BY ISAK DINESEN
WDAY

FERGUS FALLS

A semitruck crashed off Interstate 94 and onto a road below on Wednesday, June 4, following a collision between two trucks near County Road 10, according to the Minnesota State Patrol. The crash happened just north of Fergus Falls, where two westbound semis collided on I-94. One of the trucks went over the side of the bridge, landing on Otter Tail County Highway 10, which was subsequently blocked for hours. Eric Scott Watson, 53, of Forest Lake, was

driving the truck that went off the bridge. He was wearing a seat belt and was taken to a hospital with injuries that were not considered life-threatening. The other semi was driven by Brennen Charles Volkmann, 21, of Henning, who suffered injuries but did not require hospitalization. His passenger, 23-year-old Connor Michael Tierney of Wadena, was not injured. Both were wearing seat belts. The wreckage closed a two-mile stretch of County Highway 10 near Elizabeth in both directions, with debris scattered across the roadway below the interstate. Beyer Towing was

called to the scene with multiple vehicles to assist with the cleanup, which owner Justin Beyer said was more complicated than a typical rollover due to the severity and location of the crash. “When a truck just drives in the ditch and tips over on its side, then we’re trying to recover it and keep everything intact,” Beyer said. “In this case, where a truck would drive off the road and hit another road, a lot more catastrophic damage happens.” Because of the complexity of the recovery, cleanup efforts lasted much of the day. “Some things go really quick in getting the road

finally cleaned up at the end, and with a few things situated back in our yard, it probably takes upwards ... (of) 10 hours by the time we’re done,” Beyer said. He urged drivers to slow down near crash scenes for the safety of all responders. “We all want to get home to our families, so slowing down, giving us a break if we’re trying to turn a truck around or trying to work along the side of the road” is appreciated, he said. “Understand we’re just trying to do our job, and give us a break. Give us some room.” Reach WDAY reporter Isak Dinesen at idinesen@wday.com.

LOCAL BRIEFS

Fargo road construction brings major closures, delays
FARGO — Road construction season is in full swing in Fargo, with several new closures and delays impacting drivers across the city this week. Starting Wednesday, June 4, Fifth Avenue South is closed to through traffic between 15th and 16th streets as crews work to repair underground sewers. That closure is expected to last for one week. Also on Wednesday, westbound traffic on 13th Avenue South between 17th and 19th streets was shut down near Carl Ben Eielson Middle School. Eastbound lanes remain open, but drivers heading west will need to take a detour. The westbound lane is scheduled to reopen in five days. On Tuesday, lane closures on 45th Street began and have already caused major traffic slowdowns. That project will continue into mid-July. Beginning Thursday, June 5, crews will also close 23rd Avenue South to replace pavement. That

work is expected to take two weeks. **Man arrested for several outstanding warrants in Fargo SWAT raid**
FARGO — A Fargo man was arrested Tuesday, June 3, on several outstanding warrants. The arrest came after a high-risk, knock-and-announce search warrant was delivered by Fargo police officers, members of Red River Valley SWAT and the Metro Street Crimes Unit around 3 p.m. at an apartment building in the 800 block of 17th Street South. “Due to the criminal history of the suspects, the Red River Valley SWAT Team was requested to serve the search warrant and safely apprehend the suspect,” a release from the Fargo Police Department said. “The suspect was located in the apartment during the search warrant. He complied with commands given by SWAT Team members and was detained.” During the search warrant, officers threw a flash bang device to

distract the occupants of the home when police entered. Antoren Bell, 35, was arrested for failure to appear in court, the release said. He had outstanding warrants for the following: • Felon in Possession of a Firearm • Delivery of Fentanyl • Terrorizing • Prevent Arrest • Fleeing a Peace Officer • Driving Under Suspension • Possession of Cannabis (in Fargo and West Fargo) • Driving Under Suspension (three charges) • Driving Under the Influence **Road closure along 13th Avenue South expected to last 5 days**
FARGO — Starting Wednesday, June 4, motorists will encounter a road closure along 13th Avenue South for underground utility repairs. The road closure will start in the afternoon hours Wednesday, according to a release from the city of Fargo, and run along 13th Avenue South from 17th and 19th Streets South.

Eastbound 13th Avenue South will remain open during; westbound 13th Avenue South is expected to reopen in five days, the release said. **Highway Patrol ID’s Cass County man killed in western ND crash**
KILLDEER, N.D. — The North Dakota Highway Patrol has identified the Cass County man killed Saturday, May 31, in a motorcycle crash in western North Dakota. According to the North Dakota Highway Patrol, Gene Schepp, 71, of Gardner, was riding a 2010 Harley-Davidson motorcycle Saturday on Highway 22 near mile marker 123, north of Killdeer. Schepp failed to negotiate a curve and overturned. He was wearing a helmet but died of his injuries. The Highway Patrol continues to investigate the crash. The Killdeer Area Ambulance, Dunn County Sheriff’s Office and West Dunn Fire Department also responded to the crash. Located in Dunn County, Killdeer is 35 miles north of Dickinson. Forum News Service

OPINION COLUMN



Tom Stromme / The Bismarck Tribune

Rep. Scott Louser, R-Minot, urged House members to vote in favor of House Concurrent Resolution 3002, a bill that would allow sports betting.

An early indication of how voters feel about property tax reform

MINOT

A ballot proposal that would have lowered property taxes for one of North Dakota’s largest cities failed Tuesday night. It’s an interesting outcome for this moment in our state’s eternal debate over property taxes. First, some back story. As lawmakers cast their final votes on Gov. Kelly Armstrong’s sweeping property tax reform and relief package, Rep. Scott Louser, a Republican from Minot, rose to announce a new property tax ballot measure.

He did so with former lawmaker Rick Becker, the chair of 2024’s ballot measure campaign to eliminate property taxes, live streaming from the House chamber balcony. Louser later told us during a Plain Talk interview that he hadn’t coordinated his announcement with Becker, but he did propose the measure on the assumption that North Dakotans won’t be satisfied with the property tax bill lawmakers passed. “I just think there’s a better way to do it,” he said.

Do voters feel that way? Louser is currently polling his measure. Several readers provided me with screen captures of a text poll they received, and when I asked Louser about it, he said he was footing the bill for the survey. “I funded it and designed it,” he said. The goal is to measure public sentiment about the property tax reform lawmakers passed versus another proposal. Specifically, Louser’s plan to buy down 60 mills in school district property taxes, possibly coupled with a reduced form of the primary residence credit that lawmakers passed. The survey explicitly mentions a \$550 credit, which would be significantly down from the \$1,600 that lawmakers passed. Louser argues that his relief applies to commercial and agricultural properties, not just primary residences. Louser has said he’ll share the results of his polling with me when it’s completed, but in the meantime, we have an early (and admittedly imperfect) indication of how the public feels about property taxes from Minot. “The measure sought



ROB PORT

to impose a half percent sales tax in conjunction with a 12-mill decrease in the district’s general fund property-tax cap,” the Minot Daily News reports. That works out to a roughly 40% reduction in the parks portion of local property tax bills. The temptation is to read into that result an early indicator that North Dakotans may not have the appetite for more property tax reform beyond what lawmakers have passed. I certainly feel that way, though we should be cautious. The measure failed narrowly, by only a 25-vote margin. Also, turnout was abysmally low. Just 1,933 votes were cast in a city where the population is nearly 50,000, though we could argue that the low turnout is itself an indication of public sentiment. If voters are still feeling exercised about their property taxes, wouldn’t more of them have turned out for an opportunity to lower their property tax bills significantly by spreading the burden out to the much broader sales tax base? It could be that this outcome was more a reflection of turnout than voter sentiment. It could also be that a narrow majority of the voters who turned up are still dissatisfied with their property tax relief, but aren’t amenable to shifting a part of that burden to sales taxes. Which is to say, maybe they just didn’t like this specific proposal. But I believe that a critical mass of voters are, or will be, satisfied with the property tax reform the Legislature and Armstrong passed. This vote in Minot is a flawed but still relevant data point for that argument. I suspect that those hoping voters will rise up against the Armstrong property tax plan are going to find themselves disappointed. Rob Port is a columnist, news reporter and podcast host for Forum News Service. Reach him at rport@forumcomm.com.

The Forum

OF FARGO-MOORHEAD

A division of Forum Communications Company
ISSN 0895-1292 (print) and 2461-967X (digital)
USPS 206-660 | Vol. 164 No. 125
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www.inforum.com
701-235-7311 | 800-747-7311

The Forum is published twice weekly on Wednesdays and Saturdays by The Forum, 101 5th St. N., Fargo ND 58102. Periodicals postage paid at Fargo, N.D., and additional mailing offices.

CONTACT US

Administration William C. Marcil Chairman Bill Marcil Jr., Publisher publisher@forumcomm.com	Newsroom Staff Matthew Von Pinnon, Editor mvonpinnon@forumcomm.com Kaity Young, News Editor kyoung@forumcomm.com Thomas Evanela, News Editor tevanela@forumcomm.com Angie Wieck, Business, Features Editor awieck@forumcomm.com Tom Larson, Sports Editor talarson@forumcomm.com
Advertising Classified advertising 701-241-5504 Farmers' Forum ads 701-241-5504 Employment 701-241-5500 All other advertising 701-241-5431	

State law requires certain public notices to be published in a legal newspaper. The Forum meets the requirements publishing legal notices in North Dakota and designation as a legal newspaper in Minnesota.

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news@forumcomm.com,
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POSTMASTER

Send address changes to The Forum, 101 5th Street N. Fargo, ND 58102.

SUBSCRIPTION RATES

Wednesday & Saturday Mail Delivery
+ Digital All Access:
\$377.89 per year / \$34.99 per month

Digital All Access:
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