

# LPD officer found unconscious in burning vehicle

## Tractor-trailer driver credited with saving officer's life

Injured LPD officer released from ECMC

### STAFF REPORTS

Police and fire responders are continuing their investigations into a fiery two-vehicle accident this week that left a Lewiston Police Department officer unconscious in his patrol car.

According to the LPD, at approximately 5:30 a.m. Wednesday, March 27, patrols were dispatched to a two-vehicle accident on Military Road at the exit ramp from the I-190 North. Reports stated it was an LPD vehicle that was involved, and on fire, with the officer unresponsive and pinned inside the vehicle.

LPD officer Cody Bruyere was first on scene and was able to remove the officer from the vehicle with the assistance of New York State Trooper Adam Moen.



In a social media post, the LPD stated, "The actions of these officers were heroic and were vital in preventing further injury or death."

The officer involved in the MVA was later identified as Joshua Belin, who has been with LPD for two years.

According to the LPD, a preliminary investigation found Belin's vehicle was travelling northbound on Military Road when it struck the rear of a tractor-trailer and ignited. The tractor-trailer was also northbound on Military Road.

Belin was transported to ECMC

Lewiston Police Department officer Joshua Belin's patrol car is shown shortly after a two-vehicle crash. (LPD photo)

where he was treated for suffering a broken ankle and a head injury. He has since been released.

LPD said the driver of the tractor-trailer was identified as Paul Fisher, an employee of Vargo Trucking.

It stated, "During the course of our investigation, we learned that Mr. Fisher used a fire extinguisher to hold back the flames until rescuers could arrive to extricate officer Belin. Mr. Fisher's actions saved officer Belin from further injury."

The Niagara County Sheriff's Office, Town of Niagara Police, U.S. Border Patrol and Upper Mountain Fire Co. assisted LPD

on the accident scene.

Commenting on the actions of Belin, LPD Chief Frank Previte told local media, "It takes a lot to run towards something like that. These guys do something like that every day; they don't think of themselves first."

"There's a lot of danger running up to a burning vehicle. They're used to putting others before themselves; it's a bit little more when it's one of our own."

Of Fisher's actions, he added, "He probably saved his life, as well. ... When he was unconscious, the truck driver ... got out with his fire extinguishing materials and was able to knock the fire down a little bit. Had he not done that, it would have been out of control probably by the time that (responders) got there."

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## Niagara Wheatfield CSD active shooter training



### ARTICLE AND PHOTO BY LISA BIELMEIER

Orleans/Niagara BOCES Public Relations Director

On the Superintendent's Conference Day on March 15, the Niagara Wheatfield Central School District hosted emergency training and active shooter drills at West Street Elementary School and Errick Road Elementary School for staff and school resource officers. There were no students on campus during the drills, which are designed to practice staff and administrative responses, test the district's technology, and learn from the experience.

The training exercise included members of law enforcement and first responders from the Lewiston Police Department, New York State Troopers, Niagara County Sheriff's Office, U.S. Border Patrol and the Niagara County Ambulance Service.

Niagara Wheatfield CSD School Superintendent Daniel Ljiljanich said he was pleased at how well the drills went: "We are very fortunate to be able to collaborate with our law enforcement and first responders in this multi-agency training session. We are so grateful for their vested interest in our schools and community, and for the work they do to help us maintain a safe and secure learning environment for everyone."

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