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Firefighter Dies In Wreck; 4 Others Hurt

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KANSAS CITY, Mo. -- Firefighters are mourning the loss of one of their own after a pumper truck collided with two cars Sunday evening.

Gerald K. McGowan (use this image)/2004/0906/3709208.jpg/2004/0906/3709208_40X30.jpg/2004/0906/3709 Fire Department said acting fire Capt. Gerald K. McGowan (pictured, left), 57, was killed. McGowan was a 30-year veteran, KMBC reported.

Authorities said that the fire crew was on their way to a call. They were headed south on Blue Ridge Boulevard when a stopped car turned left just as the fire truck was going around it. Witnesses said the fire truck swerved, bounced off the car and hit a maroon car head-on that was yielding to the sirens.

"It's just a tragic, unfortunate accident. Nobody intended for this to happen," Sgt. Randy Sims said.

KMBC's Emily Aylward reported the pumper truck was crushed up against a tree. Some of its speed was broken by a utility pole, which was cut in half.

"That truck was coming right at me," David Whitington said.

Whitington said he was standing in his front yard and heard the sirens. He said he missed getting hit by just a few feet, and jumped out of the way. He then went to wreck and tried to help out.

"This one firefighter was trying and trying to help ... compressing, working on him. But he wasn't getting anywhere," Whitington said.

McGowan did not make it. Another firefighter was seriously hurt. Aylward reported that two other firefighters in the fire truck went to hospitals as well.

The driver that was hit head-on suffered critical injuries.

The investigation into the accident continues.

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