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## Veteran firefighter killed in wreck on way to fire

Associated Press

**KANSAS CITY, Mo.** - A veteran Kansas City firefighter was killed and four others were injured, when a pumper truck collided with two cars and then slammed into a tree while answering a call.

Acting Captain Gerald McGowan, 57, was normally a fire apparatus operator but was filling in as a captain when he was killed Sunday night. He had served with the department for 32 years and had told his wife he was planning to retire at the end of the year, said Chief Richard Dyer.

Kansas City police said the accident occurred at about 5:15 p.m. while the firefighters were racing to what turned out to be a minor fire at an apartment complex.

A car in front of the pumper slowed down to make a left-hand turn into a driveway. The truck struck the car as it tried to drive around the car, but the driver continued to make the turn. Police said the driver was not injured.

The southbound truck then collided head-on with a northbound car that had stopped on the opposite curb. The crash critically injured the car's driver, Terry Toelliner, 50, and forced the car into a yard. Toelliner's condition Monday was not immediately available.

The pumper continued to move, cutting a utility pole in half and finally crashing into a tree just in front of a house.

Three other firefighters were injured in the accident. John Parison, 29, had to be cut out of the wreckage and is in stable condition at the University of Kansas Hospital in Kansas City, Kan. Leroie Workcuff, 30, and Stanley Williams, 47, were treated and released from St. Joseph Health Center.

Police Sgt. Randy Sims said the pumper driver was not at fault, calling it a "tragic, unfortunate incident."

Dyer said McGowan had recently transferred to the station that responded to the call and, of the four men riding on the pumper, he had the most experience. Dyer added that one of McGowan's two sons is also a Kansas City firefighter.

This was the first fatality for area firefighters since last November, when Kansas City, Kan., fire captain Gary Boyert was killed in a one-car wreck driving to a call. The last Kansas City, Mo., firefighter to die in the line of duty was in 1999, when battalion chief John Tvedten got lost inside a burning building and ran out of air.