

By Jan Schultz

The Imperial Republican

Highway 6, north of Enders, was closed for several hours Saturday after somewhat of a bizarre accident piled up three vehicles and damaged another.

And, according to one of the people involved, "It was a miracle we all walked away."

Shona Heim, who was home in Champion Wednesday recuperating, said she feels very blessed to have come out of the accident with just bruises and whiplash.

County Sheriff Kevin Mueller said his office received the call shortly after 11 a.m. Saturday, but eventually turned the investigation over to the State Patrol so the county could handle traffic control.

The series of events started as Maddux Cattle Co., was moving 1,000-plus head of cattle east across the highway near mile marker 31, close to the Mark Fanning residence.

The sheriff's office was contacted ahead of time and okayed the moving of the cattle across the highway. Deputy Justin Mueller was on the south side of the cattle crossing to hold traffic there, while Jack Maddux of Wauneta was flagging vehicles to stop on the north.

Heim's 2003 Olds Alero was one of two vehicles stopped on the north. Monte Nordhausen of Wauneta was in a 2007 Chevy

Tahoe parked ahead of Heim as they waited for the cattle to cross.

Heim said she had glanced in her mirror and noticed a pickup approaching behind her.

"It looked like he was coming full tilt. I knew he wasn't slowing down so I turned away," she said.

She doesn't remember too much after that.

The eastbound 2005 Chevy pickup registered to Theodore Laumann of Sterling, Colo., slammed into the rear of Heim's car, which then careened into Nordhausen's.

That impact also pushed the Nordhausen vehicle into Maddux's 2001 Chevy extended cab pickup pulled off on the right shoulder of the highway.

During the chain reaction, Maddux was knocked to the ground after being grazed by the Colorado pickup.

"The pickup was sliding sideways. I was waving the flag as best I could," he said.

Maddux said Wednesday he was fine and escaped with no major injuries.

"We feel very lucky and glad no one was hurt very bad," he said.

After the collision, Deputy Mueller called in for assistance, and also alerted Imperial EMS, which sent one ambulance to the scene.

Sheriff Mueller arrived on the scene and called in the State Patrol, so he and the deputy could direct traffic onto the highway's shoulders in both directions around the accident scene.

Heim was transported to Chase County Community Hospital, where she was treated and released.

The State Patrol continues to investigate the incident.