

NEWS ITEM: A 15-year-old Wheatland High School freshman was killed in a one-vehicle crash east of town early Sunday morning.

Jeremiah Grizzly "Grizz" Johnson of Wheatland died as a result of the crash.

According to the Wyoming Highway Patrol report, Johnson was traveling northbound on YO Ranch Road at approximately 12:30 a.m. at a high rate of speed when, for an unknown reason, the vehicle drifted to the left at the crest of a hill and off the roadway. The driver corrected to the right, re-entering the roadway, then over-corrected to the left, putting the 1993 Chevy Suburban in a counter clockwise yaw. The vehicle left the roadway, went through a barbed wire fence and struck a concrete-lined irrigation ditch. The vehicle overturned once, then began to cartwheel to the front before rolling again and coming to rest on the driver's side in a pasture.

Johnson who was ejected out the right rear door window, was pronounced dead at the scene after receiving massive head and chest trauma.

Authorities report that no seatbelt was in use.

"It didn't seem like him-he didn't go anywhere alone, especially when he was driving," said Johnson's twin brother, Travis Johnson.

The atmosphere at Wheatland High School was a somber one Monday as students and teachers were dealing with the loss of the fellow classmate, student and friend.

"He was a good friend, a good athlete-one of a kind," Logan Walker said.

"We met as a student body (Monday morning) and let the kids know what had happened," Wheatland High School Vice Principal Maureen Ryff said.

She said the Wheatland Ministerial Association, the school's guidance counselors and the staff were available throughout the day for students to get help or have someone to talk with.

Johnson's friends and family fed lunch to the student body in the commons area, and the students who felt the need to be with friends or counselors were allowed to visit in the commons area.

"We're getting through pretty well," Ryff said.

"This is one of the closest group of kids I've ever seen," said Doug Jackson, teacher and Driver's Ed instructor. "They stick together through everything-both good and bad."

Funeral services were held Tuesday at the United Methodist Church in Wheatland.

The cause of the crash is still under investigation.