

6 injured when wall collapses

Six men were injured at a house construction site in Farmington Hills Tuesday when a wall caved in on them, police said.

Five of the six were taken to Botsford General Hospital after the 10 a.m. accident. One man was treated on the scene by Farmington Hills firefighters and CEMS advanced life support personnel.

Brock Nelson, 37, had sustained damage to the spine and was transported to the University of Michigan Medical Center in Ann Arbor in serious condition. Gary Kloche, 30, is in serious condition at Botsford with chest injuries. Harry Conis, 38, is in serious condition with leg injuries at Providence Hospital in Southfield. Douglas Couts, 30, was treated for leg injuries and released. James Franklin, 25, was treated for arm injuries and released.

The accident took place at a house site in the Woods of Copper Creek subdivision on Hidden Trail.

"The workers had everybody clear when we arrived," said fire Chief Richard Marinucci. "Three of them were not moving."



PETER BALDWIN

Construction accident: Farmington Hills firefighters and CEMS medical personnel come to the aid of two of six men injured during a construction-site accident Tuesday. Three of the men were seriously injured when a wall fell on them.

Chase from page 1A

fleeing can be debated for months or years afterwards.

"There's a lot of factors involved," said Farmington Public Safety deputy director Michael Wiggins. "It's a tough call."

"The seriousness of the crime, ability to apprehend, time of day, traffic and even weather conditions are all weighed in such decisions."

Both the Farmington and Farmington Hills departments have comprehensive policies on high-speed pursuit situations.

In the two incidents in Farmington, the pursuits were called off by the commander in charge.

With the pickup truck driver,

the commanding officer already had the man's license and when the person fleeing was spotted speeding in the Floral Park subdivision, the chase was immediately called off.

"She (commander Maria Putt) said, 'That's it. That's enough,'" Wiggins said. "Even at that hour (2 a.m.), you don't know what's going to happen, who's just coming home from work. It's not worth it."

The situation with the motorcycle also had special circumstances. For one, the motorcycle was leaving city limits.

"You look at a motorcycle; the chances for an accident are much

greater," Wiggins said.

Generally, a high-speed pursuit is an accepted practice when a life-threatening felony is committed such as an armed robbery. Something less offensive — such as fleeing and eluding during a traffic stop — comes down to the officer's judgment.

"It goes to the totality of the crime," said Sgt. Ray Cranston, who is traffic supervisor for the Farmington Hills police, "the more severe the crime, the more liberal the pursuit policy."

The debate ensues, however. A series of House bills, Nos. 4080-82, call for everything from making fleeing and eluding a high

misdemeanor to forfeiture of vehicles.

A bill expected to be introduced in the Senate in the next few weeks calls for harsher penalties for fleeing and eluding. The bill would make it a felony, while reducing liability to cities when municipalities are at fault.

State Sen. William Van Regenmorter, who is sponsoring the bill, said stiffer penalties will ideally deter people who flee and elude police.

In cases where innocent third parties are injured or killed, liability would be limited if police followed standards set by a state commission, or pre-existing

standards OK'd by the panel of experts.

Wiggins said the liability should fall on the person who is fleeing and causing accidents.

"Unfortunately it's the municipalities who have the money opposed to the person involved in the pursuit," Wiggins said.

Another House bill, No. 4703, would create a policy on police chases. But there's the matter of what constitutes a police pursuit.

Cranston said he has 15 photocopies of tickets issued to drivers for going over 100 miles per hour. "Somebody had to catch up to those people," Cranston said. "Is that a pursuit?"

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