

Driver, 12 students injured in Parkway school bus crash

Written by Bill LeConey

Monday, November 12, 2012 10:19 pm

All students back at school by Wednesday

SOMERS POINT – It has been a tough couple of weeks for Jekerah Callaway and her family.

Callaway, 15, was injured Monday afternoon when the school bus she was riding in veered off the Garden State Parkway and hit a tree.

She was among 33 students from Charter Tech High School for the Performing Arts here who were transported to area hospitals after the accident. Twelve students were injured; however, the injuries were minor, according to state police.

The driver of the bus, Christine Williams, 54, of Pleasantville, was also injured in the crash, which occurred in Egg Harbor Township near mile marker 34 northbound on the Garden State Parkway.

Callaway suffered a back sprain, a neck sprain and a possible concussion, according to her mother, Michele Griffin.

“I know she won’t be able to dance for awhile,” Griffin said. “They’re saying like six weeks. It’s a shame.”

Two weeks ago, Callaway and her family were displaced from their home in the Bungalow Park section of Atlantic City because of flooding and damage from Hurricane Sandy.

“We had an extensive amount of water up there,” Griffin said. “It messed up a lot of houses.”

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Kimberly Brown's daughter, Amiyah Hill, was also injured in the accident, which involved a bus owned and operated by Safety Bus Company of Pennsauken.

Brown said a wheel apparently fell off the bus, and the driver prevented a more serious accident from occurring. She said there was a lot of screaming and pandemonium on the bus, especially because a tree branch crashed through a window.

"My daughter said she heard a thump, and the next thing you know the bus started to swerve left and right," Brown said. "It was scary."

Police said the cause of the accident is under investigation. The bus will be inspected by a commercial inspection unit to determine whether a mechanical failure contributed to the crash.

Ten of the students were transported to Shore Medical Center in Somers Point, where they were treated for minor injuries, according to a hospital spokesperson. Twenty-three were taken to AtlantiCare Regional Medical Center in Atlantic City, although it was unclear how many were treated.

Charter Tech office manager Phyllis London said Wednesday afternoon that all of the injured students had returned to class by Wednesday, and all seemed to be in good spirits. However, teachers and administrators have offered counseling and help to any student who needs it.

Arthur Tubbs, Charter Tech's chief administrator, said the bus was provided by the Atlantic City School District to transport the students to their homes in Atlantic City.

Tubbs said school officials stayed with the students at the hospitals until parents or guardians were notified.

"We are very relieved that the injuries weren't more serious," Tubbs said. "Our primary concern was for the students' safety, to make sure there were first responders on the scene, and that the

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students were well taken care of.”

The accident is still under investigation.