

City worker nearly loses arm on job

By JOSEPH B. NADEAU

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WOONSOCKET - A member of the city's Public Works Department is recovering at Rhode Island Hospital following a work accident that severely injured his right arm Monday.

Jeremy Fontaine, 28, of Bentley Street, was listed in fair condition at Rhode Island Hospital Thursday where he is recovering from surgery to reattach his partially severed arm.

Fontaine, assigned to the Parks and Recreation Department, had been working with a city crew installing fencing around a work site on Logee Street when the accident occurred, according to police and city officials.

Fontaine was digging post holes with an auger-like power tool just after 1 p.m. when his sweatshirt got caught in the spinning device, according to Deputy Police Chief Richard Dubois.

According to Dubois, the auger tool continued to twist up the garment and quickly caught Fontaine's arm, partially severing it.

"City rescue personnel immediately transported Fontaine to Rhode Island Hospital, where doctors conducted surgery to reattach his arm", Dubois said.

"It was so quick, they were getting out of there when I arrived on scene," Dubois said of the rescue crew's swift response.

Dubois reported Fontaine was improving, and was said to have some feeling in his hand and fingers on Thursday.

"The fact our rescue crew got him right to the hospital probably saved his arm," Dubois said. Michael Annarummo, city director of public works, could not comment on Fontaine's condition Thursday due to confidentiality requirements - but he also pointed to quick action at the accident location near Mount St. Charles Academy as being helpful to Fontaine.

A Lincoln firefighter had been passing the area as the accident occurred and stopped to render immediate assistance, Annarummo said.

The firefighter and a member of the city work crew teamed to provide "essential" first aid to Fontaine until the city's Rescue 1 and Engine 1 units arrived at the location, according to Annarummo. "They were phenomenal, both the Lincoln firefighter and city worker at the scene and the rescue personnel that responded," Annarummo said.

The Parks and Recreation crew had been installing fencing around an area on Logee used as a storage site under the Logee Street reconstruction project, Annarummo said.

The lot, owned by Mount St. Charles Academy, had been used to store construction materials during the project, but more recently had been collecting refuse from illegal dumping, he noted. "They were installing the fence to secure it," he said.

City officials were trying to identify the Lincoln firefighter on Thursday so he could be thanked for his role in the incident, Annarummo said. "The family has asked me to do that," he added.