

# CRASH

from FRONT

was just completely blacked out from all the smoke. I was probably one of the first people to get there within the first few minutes after the crash.”

Upon arrival, he was greeted by mass chaos and a situation he describes as being “surreal”.

Flames were spreading rapidly, black smoke limited visibility, and nearby fuel tanks continued to heat and just explode. “Basically, we just ran into unknowns,” he said. “You’ve got to prepare for the worst. Our first priority on something like that was organizing what’s going to come later.” So, Conover and the rest set up a makeshift headquarters and casualty collection point at a familiar business called Stoooge’s Bar and Grill where they began assessing the situation.

“We were told that that bar was probably closer than we should have been,” he remarks. “So we actually had to back up a little bit because all that smoke from jet fuel and everything burning was basically just blowing right over us. So we smelt that for hours. And within like 45 minutes, we were getting calls of people finding bodies in parking lots and stuff like that.”

Unfortunately, many victims were beyond saving. However the EMS remained on call to try and help anyone who was found. For many hours, Conover and other responders were on the scene, doing the best they could to get everything under control.

Despite many years of experience, this fateful evening had brought the worst and most complicated situation Conover had ever dealt with. “I’ve worked some bad car accidents while working on the interstate for years – you know, like semi crashes,” he said. “And at one point the zoo there in Louisville had a train that derailed and a lot of people were hurt. Also, just a few months prior to this plane crash, we had a factory explode with a lot of victims in it. So I would say up to the plane crash, the factory was probably one of the biggest, wildest incidents that I had been a part of. But to the extent of a plane crash, I would say I never had to deal with anything close to that. I had been doing like 20 and a half



**A flaming inferno was waiting for the first responders when they arrived at the crash site in Louisville. (Photo source: John Conover)**



**The aerial photo showed just one site of many where debris of UPS Airlines Flight 2976 hit the ground. (Photo source: John Conover)**

years at the time when that plane crashed. So really, I hadn’t seen anything like that up to that point.”

“When I got there, it was the first time ever in my career that I was just not sure what was gonna happen,” he recalled. “I was wondering are we even going to come home from this?” As he worked on the front lines and faced an environment that could’ve surely killed him, Conover’s thoughts kept wandering back to his family at home and he yearned to be with them. In fact, he even recorded a short video for his wife on Snapchat, telling her that he loved her just in case he didn’t ever get the chance to tell her again. “Tell your family and friends that you love them all the time,” he insists. “Because you just don’t know when you’re not gonna be able to tell them again.”

Thankfully, he was able to walk away from the scene physically unharmed, and eventually, thanks to hours of hard work from

the numerous individuals on site, the situation was under control.

Unfortunately however, there was no way to reverse the damage that had been done – whether physically or mentally. For Conover, the experience had left a major lasting impact on his mind. “There were definitely some long sleepless nights after that,” he said, thoughtfully. “You know, it’s just something your brain can’t really process. You can’t ever prepare for something like this.”

But despite the unpredictability of life, people can rely on first responders like John Conover to race towards danger while others flee. Yet many seem to forget that beneath the uniforms and heroism, these brave men and women are just as profoundly human as anyone else, each carrying a courage within that compels them to risk their lives for people that they have never even met.

# DATA

from FRONT

sources now describe data centers as both energy- and water-intensive, with some large projects using millions of gallons a day.

Against that backdrop, Adair County’s water numbers are modest. Columbia/Adair Utilities District reported that in 2024 it produced or purchased 743.646 million gallons of water and sold 509.992 million gallons. That works out to an average of about 1.4 million gallons sold per day. The same annual report listed 8,011 residential customers and showed a reported peak pumping day of 3.115 million gallons. Put simply, a “mid-sized” data center using about 300,000 gallons a day would equal more than one-fifth of the district’s current average daily water sales. A very large facility using 5 million gallons a day would be well above the utility’s reported peak day pumped for 2024.

That does not mean Adair County lacks industrial assets. Kentucky’s development materials show the county does have industrial land to market. The Green River Commerce

Park has more than 200 acres available, a certified build-ready pad, and public listings say industrial water, wastewater, electricity, natural gas and fiber-optic telecommunications are in place. Another Columbia industrial site is marketed with highway access to the Louie B. Nunn Parkway, utility service and power from Taylor County RECC.

Still, those same materials also underline why Adair is better positioned for traditional light industrial recruitment than for a major digital campus. Kentucky’s Adair County community profile places the county about 22 miles from the interstate. Census figures show a county of just 7,136 households, with 85.1% of households subscribing to broadband internet. That is not a strike against the county; it simply shows Adair is a rural market, not a major fiber hub or a dense metro corridor where cloud and AI developers have concentrated.

Power may be an even larger question than water. A relatively compact NREL showcase data center was designed for 10 megawatts

at full buildout, and the federal government’s 2025 permitting order defined qualifying AI data center projects as those needing more than 100 megawatts of new load. Adair County’s public site sheets identify an electric provider, but the materials reviewed do not advertise the kind of massive transmission-ready surplus that hyperscale operators usually seek. That absence does not prove the capacity is unavailable, but it does suggest Adair is not currently marketing itself as a serious data-center contender.

So the bottom line is this: Adair County may have land, local leadership and some utility-ready industrial property, but data centers are a different class of prospect. Based on the county’s publicly available water, location and site-marketing data, the chances of attracting one appear low for now, especially compared with places that already offer huge power reserves, major fiber corridors and far deeper water capacity.

# CRUISE

from FRONT

keeps you motivated to continue each summer?”

Robert Knight: “For several years, as Cruise Ins became more popular in surrounding counties, I had many car lovers approach me, with hopes of getting one started in Columbia. I began the process of getting the approval of the county officials in early 2023 and the first Columbia Cruise In became a reality in April 2023. The Cruise In does require a lot of work, but I love this community and it keeps me motivated to continue with the Cruise Ins, just from seeing the number of people come out to see the cars, or just come for food. We family oriented in the community.”

AP: “The first Cruise-In of the year for May 2023 at the judicial center. What can visitors expect this year compared to previous seasons? And what will it take to get participation back to those earlier levels?”

RK: “For 2026, we are adding a monthly car show, in addition to the cruise in. Participants can choose to enter the car show for a \$15 entry fee, but if they just want to come to the cruise in, they can do that as well at no cost. We will be giving away 10 trophies each month. All vehicles will be judged by the participants (those putting entries in the car show). We are hoping by adding the car show, this will add more interest and get our numbers back up to near 100 participants or more each month.”

AP: “Where do most of the participating vehicles and owners come from—primarily local, or do you draw from surrounding counties and beyond?”

RK: “We have participants from Adair and all surrounding counties. We hope to see new participants this year, as we know there are many out there who have never come.”

AP: “What makes the Columbia Cruise-In special compared to similar events in the region?”

RK: “The addition of the monthly car show will



**All car enthusiasts are looking forward to have a glimpse at the countless classic vehicles meeting in the city.**



**Shiny chrome and polished paint: In ten days the Cruise Ins for classic cars start again at Columbia’s Judicial Center.**

set us apart from some of the surrounding counties but we pride our event on being family oriented and just a good place to come out and enjoy the evening, grab some food from our vendors and walk around with your family and maybe reminisce about cars you have owned or loved in the past. We hope to have more food trucks this year and offer a bigger variety.”

AP: “How important is this event for downtown Columbia, both in terms of community atmosphere and support for local businesses?”

RK: “We hope the event brings more revenue into the county for local businesses. Many of the participants come early which will lead to doing some local shopping. We would love to see some

of the businesses on the square be open later on the second Saturday of the month to allow people who come to the cruise in/car show be able to see what Columbia has to offer in the way of shopping local.”

AP: “Looking ahead, what are your hopes for the future of the Cruise-In, and are there any new ideas or additions you would like to see in the coming years?”

RK: “We just want to continue to grow, and hopefully add some activities that will promote more family involvement, if growth continues to happen, we may have to look for an alternate location. We are always open to new ideas and hopefully we can pass this torch of coordination on to someone else who has the same love for cars as we do.”

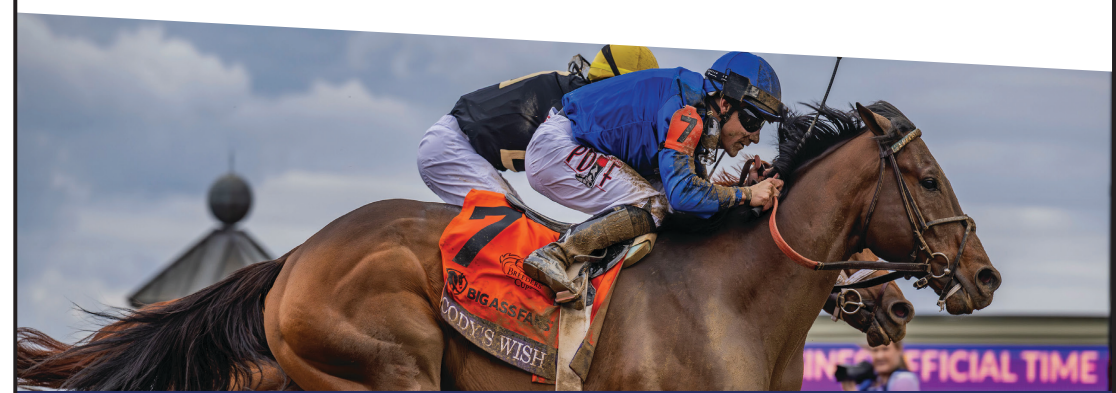
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