A driver involved in a highway crash safely came to a rest Friday, but still suffered critical injuries soon after. That's because he tried to cross the Sawgrass Expressway on foot, and a tractor-trailer struck him, authorities say.

Matthew Scott Danchak, 34, of Tamarac, stopped in a median following the initial crash with a vehicle in the northbound lanes of the Sawgrass Expressway, north of the Sample Road exit, about 12:40 p.m., the said Florida Highway Patrol Sgt. Mark Wysocky.

Danchak may have been trying to reach the other person's vehicle, which was on the right shoulder of the Sawgrass, when he tried to cross the roadway. That's when the tractor-trailer struck Danchak and disappeared, officials said. Danchak was taken by helicopter to Broward Health North.

This wasn't the first time someone tried to cross a highway and it ended in tragedy, Wysocky said.

"A lot of times people, they're not able to judge the speed of a vehicle on the highway," Wysocky said. "They think they can make it across but in reality the car is going 65, 70 miles an hour, and they just don't realize it's going that fast."

Anyone in a collision should stay where it's safe and wait for authorities, Wysocky said.

"If you're off the roadway, don't attempt to cross an interstate highway," he said. "It's just too dangerous. Wait for law enforcement. Wait until the roadway is closed.

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Wait until someone can stop traffic."

The tractor-trailer is white and was pulling a white box trailer. The right front of the vehicle was damaged, and it is missing the lower mirror, officials said.

The Highway Patrol asks anyone with information on the hit and run or the tractor-trailer to call the agency at 954-837-4012 or Broward Crime Stoppers at 954-493-8477.

abarkhurst@tribune.com or 954-356-4451

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