

For the second time in a year, a Champaign resident was killed after falling debris from an overpass struck their vehicle. Before this recent incident, prominent Urbana lawyer Samuel T. Howe was killed when a can of gasoline was dropped from an overpass on Windsor Road onto Interstate 57, where he had been driving.

Police received a cell phone report of young males throwing debris from the Prospect Avenue overpass onto Interstate 74 just before the 8 a.m. accident today.

43-year-old Emily Sawyer had been driving her mother to church in St. Joseph when a rock the size of a football crashed through the front windshield of Sawyer's car, splitting open her head. Sawyer was taken to Carle Foundation Hospital and was pronounced dead on arrival.

Sawyer was an administrative aide at Champaign Unit 4 schools, as well as a breast-cancer survivor. She has three children younger than 10 and an 86-year-old mother.

Sawyer's mother, Celine Taylor, was treated at Carle for a broken arm and multiple bruises. Her two sisters, Felicity Shrove and Donna Taylor, issued this statement at the hospital: "This was a senseless tragedy. Emily was a wonderful mother and caring daughter. Who would do this to a perfect stranger, just for kicks? It could have been any one of us or any of our kids. We hope that steps can be taken to prevent this from happening to anyone else."

Relatives at the hospital conducted a news conference and said fences should be erected on overpasses throughout the area.

Anyone with information about the accident can call or contact Champaign County Crimestoppers at (217) 373-TIPS.