Writing News Stories – the Inverted Pyramid Style

Here are the details of the incident:

**An accident occurred. It happened yesterday. Today is Tuesday. The accident was a car accident. It happened in Murfreesboro where Main Street and Broad Street intersect. One person was killed. The person was John Frazier. He was 20 years old and lived in Murfreesboro at 212 Moore Court. He was driving a blue 1998 Ford Mustang. He was driving northwest on Broad Street at about 5 p.m. He lost control of the car. It was raining, and the road was slick. He was also driving about 20 mph over the speed limit. He was the only one in the car. The car smashed into a utility pole along Broad Street. The impact crushed the whole front of the car. Frazier was thrown through the car's windshield. He landed on the pavement some 20 feet away. He wasn't wearing a seat belt. He was killed instantly.**

To write an inverted-pyramid story from the facts, you first would write a **heaadline** that catches the reader’s interest. Then, you would write a **lead t**hat summarizes the most important information. Like all good straight news leads, this one should summarize the **"what," "where," "when," "who," "why,"** and **"how"** of the story.

**A Murfreesboro man died Monday afternoon when his car spun out of control on rain-slickened Broad Street, crashed into a utility pole and threw him through the windshield.**

The next part of the story should pick up on some element of the lead and give more **important facts**. In this example, the next part gives more information about the victim:

**The man, 20-year-old John Frazier of 212 Moore Court, lost control of his blue 1998 Ford Mustang around 5 p.m. while heading northwest on Broad Street at about 20 mph over the speed limit.**

The next part presents more details about the crash (this would be a good place to insert quotations from witnesses):

**Skidding on the wet pavement, the car struck a utility pole along Broad Street. The impact threw Frazier through the windshield and onto the pavement some 20 feet away.**

The story's final part wraps up the remaining details:

**Frazier, who was not wearing his seat belt at the time of the crash, died instantly. The pole crushed the front of the Mustang.**

The idea here is that the story would still contain all the essential information if an editor of the newspaper had to make it shorter. The editor could cut out the last and second last part of the story and still know the name of the victim and a few details about the accident.

So you take this:

**An accident occurred. It happened yesterday. Today is Tuesday. The accident was a car accident. It happened in Murfreesboro where Main Street and Broad Street intersect. One person was killed. The person was John Frazier. He was 20 years old and lived in Murfreesboro at 212 Moore Court. He was driving a blue 1998 Ford Mustang. He was driving northwest on Broad Street at about 5 p.m. He lost control of the car. It was raining, and the road was slick. He was also driving about 20 mph over the speed limit. He was the only one in the car. The car smashed into a utility pole along Broad Street. The impact crushed the whole front of the car. Frazier was thrown through the car's windshield. He landed on the pavement some 20 feet away. He wasn't wearing a seat belt. He was killed instantly.**

And Turn it into this:

# FATAL ACCIDENT ON BROAD STREET

**A Murfreesboro man died Monday afternoon when his car spun out of control on rain-slickened Broad Street, crashed into a utility pole and threw him through the windshield.**

**The man, 20-year-old John Frazier of 212 Moore Court, lost control of his blue 1998 Ford Mustang around 5 p.m. while heading northwest on Broad Street at about 20 mph over the speed limit.**

**Skidding on the wet pavement, the car struck a utility pole along Broad Street. The impact threw Frazier through the windshield and onto the pavement some 20 feet away.**

**Frazier, who was not wearing his seat belt at the time of the crash, died instantly. The pole crushed the front of the Mustang.**

Now you try it! – Using the Inverted Pyramid and the following accident details, Write a news article complete with a **Headline, Lead, important facts and more important facts.**  Follow those with the less important **Facts.**

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| An accident occurred. |
| Burnaby’s RCMP traffic division is still investigating this accident. |
| It happened in North Burnaby. |
| It involved an SMT transit bus and a car. |
| One person was killed. |
| Passengers on the bus were hurt. |
| Police want information from witnesses. |
| Ten passengers suffered minor injuries. |
| The accident happened at 11:30 a.m. |
| The accident happened between Underhill and Arden streets on Broadway Ave. |
| The accident was a car accident. |
| The bus was heading west on Broadway Avenue. |
| The car crossed the center line. |
| The car drove head on into the bus. |
| The car was a 1995 Toyota Camry. |
| The car was travelling east on Broadway Avenue. |
| The driver of the car was killed. |
| The driver was 45 years old. |
| The driver was from Burnaby. |
| The driver was male. |
| The driver’s name has not been released by the RCMP. |
| The RCMP have not determined the cause of the accident. |
| Witnesses saw the driver driving erratically prior to the accident. |

**Examples of News Articles:**

Example 1:

# One Person Killed in Broadway Avenue Accident

One person was killed in a car accident that happened between Underhill and Arden streets on Broadway Avenue, North Burnaby, at 11:30 a.m. The accident involved a 1995 Toyota Camry and a public transit bus. The driver of the car, a forty-five year old man from Burnaby, was killed in the collision, but the RCMP has not released his identity. Ten unnamed passengers from the transit bus sustain minor injuries. The accident occurred when the car, heading east, crossed the centre line and drove head on into the westbound bus. Witnesses say they saw the Toyota driving erratically prior to the accident. Burnaby's RCMP traffic division is still investigating the cause of the accident and is asking for any information from witnesses.

Example 2:

One Dies in Car Accident with Bus  
One person was killed in a car accident between Underhill and Arden streets on Broadway Avenue, North Burnaby, at 11:30 a.m. The accident involved a 1995 Toyota Camry and a public transit bus. The driver of the car, a forty-five year old man from Burnaby, was killed in the collision, but the RCMP has not released his identity. Ten unnamed passengers from the transit bus sustained minor injuries. The accident occurred when the car, heading east, crossed the centre line and drove head on into the westbound bus. Witnesses say they saw the Camry driving erratically prior to the accident. Burnaby's RCMP traffic division is still investigating the cause of the accident and is asking for any information from witnesses.

Example 3:

## Fatal Accident in North Burnaby

At 11:30 a.m. in North Burnaby, an accident involving a Translink bus and a car killed one and injured 10. The 1995 Toyota Camry heading east on Broadway drove head into a Translink bus heading west, leaving 10 passengers with minor injuries and killing the male driver of the car. The car had crossed the center line between Underhill and Arden streets when the accident occured. Burnaby's RCMP traffic division is still investigating and police are asking for the co-operation of witnesses who have any information regarding the accident. The cause of the accident has not yet been determined however witnesses claim to have seen the driver driving erratically prior the the accident. The driver of the car was a 45 year old male from Burnaby who's name has not yet been released by the RCMP.