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## **UPDATED: SUV Slams Through Window of Embody Juice Restaurant: No One Hurt, Everybody Shaken**

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**Categories :** [Business](#), [Public Safety](#)

**Tagged as :** [Embodly Fitness Gourmet 2017](#), [Motor Vehicle Crash 2017](#), [Motor Vehicle Crashes 2017](#), [Vehicle Hits Building 2017](#)

**Date :** September 21, 2017

Screams and a crash that shook the building like an earthquake were heard and felt when an SUV driven by an older woman smashed through the plate glass window at the front of Embody Fitness Gourmet a little before 12:30 p.m., Thursday.

— *See update below, added at 9:18 a.m., Friday*

Everybody at the store in the Noroton Heights Shopping Center was shaken and shocked, but nobody was hurt, employees and a witness said afterward. A passer-by said she heard screaming.

Within an hour, the SUV was removed from the sidewalk, where it had butted the building. The entire store was now al fresco, but there were no customers to experience it.

Glass in shards (some of them massive), bent window frames and even a bent wall underneath the window were all that was left after the black SUV was removed from the scene. Green and white chairs outside the front of the eatery (located next to Heights Pizza) sat mangled on the sidewalk.

Store employees had lunch outside — their own al fresco dining.

After a building inspector saw the damage, it was determined that the store could reopen, with a new window and work on some supporting structures for the window, said Ben Bliss, regional manager for Embody.

The store might possibly open by tonight, but more likely by Friday morning, Bliss said. Workers were already on the scene by 1:30 p.m., getting rid of the debris and getting ready to make a repair.

The woman who crashed the car was alone in it. She was about to meet a friend at Jimmy's Southside, the restaurant behind Embody. She apologized afterward, Bliss said.

#### **UPDATE from Darien Police**

Darien police officers called to the scene spoke with the driver of the 2006 Mercedes SUV, a 79-year-old New Canaan woman, who told them she was uninjured.

Police said they were told she believed she may have pushed the wrong pedal when pulling into the parking spot, causing the SUV to suddenly accelerate.

"Due to potential structural damage, the Noroton Heights Fire Department responded to ensure the structure was stable," police said in a news release. "The accident is still under investigation, but no charges have been made against the operator as of [the time of] this release." The news release was emailed at 9:08 a.m., Friday.

"Everybody's fine," said Conserra Coleman, a store employee. "Thankfully, everybody's OK," including the driver.

#### **There's a Word for This: 'Infenestration'**

"It happened very quickly," Coleman said. She wasn't in the front area of the store and at first didn't know what had happened. "It felt like an earthquake — like the whole building shook," she said. Another employee, Dany Diaz, used almost the same words, and he, too, remembered the building shaking.

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Brandon Ciarias, another Embody employee, said he saw the woman apparently trying to park her Mercedes Benz SUV. Perhaps she hit the accelerator rather than the brakes, he said.

Ciarias heard the crash, looked up and, "I was like, 'What the heck!'" he said. "I thought it was an explosion."

Bliss, the regional manager, got a call from Ciarias at 12:25 p.m., right after it happened. Bliss recalled the conversation:

*Ciarias: You gotta come down here!*

*Bliss: Why?*

*Ciarias: Somebody ran into the store.*

Gillen Bryan, owner of the Embody Fitness Gourmet chain of restaurants, was in Pennsylvania at the time, but he's seen video from a store surveillance camera. He said in an interview it shows the SUV seeming to try to park, then go right into the building. He also assumed the woman's foot slipped off the brake and onto the accelerator. Hard.

"We are extremely grateful no one was hurt in this unfortunate incident," Bryan said in an email. "It our hope we are back open for business tomorrow (Friday). Mistakes happen."

Embody [moved to the location last spring](#), after being located for years in the Equinox fitness club in Noroton Heights. The entire Noroton Heights Shopping Center is slated to be demolished and replaced, with some town approvals for the project already given, although no definite date has been set.

Asked an hour after it happened if there was anything else people should know about the incident, Bliss replied:

"Please use the front door next time. You can say that."