

Mustang Complex

Security Rollover

Facilitated Learning
Analysis

September 9, 2012

The Mustang Complex is a fire that stretches across the Salmon Challis and Bitterroot National Forests over the Idaho and Montana borders. Immersed in the firefighting activities are the lives and businesses of local private citizens. Multiple roads lead into the fire area requiring the assistance of the National Guard and security officers from many different agencies to maintain the safety of local landowners and the public. Checkpoints are established around the fire and are staffed 24 hours.

Shawn had arrived on the fire two days ago to assist with the security needs of the fire. He went to ICP, received his briefing and assignment on the North end of the fire. Shortly after arriving he was switched from day shift to night shift.

On this particular evening Shawn attended the night shift briefing and then drove up to area he was assigned. He dropped off his passenger at a checkpoint and began to drive up the dirt road. About $\frac{1}{4}$ of a mile up the road his map began sliding around on the console, distracting him. He grabbed the map and reached around the passenger seat to toss it in the backseat. For a brief moment (Shawn recalls 1 to 2 seconds) he glanced back to see where the map

had landed. Shawn is not quite sure what happened to enable the accident but thinks for a brief moment he might have pulled the steering wheel towards the shoulder while he glanced back. When he heard the crunch of gravel he quickly looked forward and felt the vehicle begin to leave the soft shoulder. While he tried to swing the steering wheel in the opposite direction to get the vehicle back on the road, the soft dirt and gravel of the roadside pulled the vehicle off the shoulder. The vehicle remained upright but began a gentle and slow slide down the slope approximately 10 feet. It had almost come to a stop, Shawn had a brief thought of "Thank Goodness" and then the vehicle slowly tilted to the right and rolled over.

Often people involved in accidents will recall time moving very slowly in a violent incident. In this case, Shawn was not moving at a high rate of speed (barely 15mph) and had just experienced a slow slide down the hill. But with the steepness of the slope and the angle of the vehicle it finally hit a point where it slowly rolled over. Shawn hung in the seatbelt for a few moments. He recalls fighting the urge to quickly release the seatbelt, knowing that if he did he could injure himself falling. Shawn braced himself



Lesson Learned From Shawn

Don't let yourself get distracted when driving even if it is for a moment. It only takes a second for things to go from normal to "oh no".



and released the seatbelt. He slowly pulled himself out of the vehicle and checked for injuries. As he grabbed his radio and cell phone, the people at the checkpoint had heard a noise that sounded like a gunshot (Shawn thinks it was probably the windows breaking) and came down the road to see what had happened. They ensured he was examined by a paramedic and made notifications.