



# *Rapid Lesson Sharing*

**Montana Department of Natural Resources & Conservation**

**Snowshoe Fire**

**11 September 2017**

## **What Happened**

On September 11<sup>th</sup> 2017, around 1015, a squad was tasked to go to the west side of the Snowshoe Fire to mop up along the fireline. Upon arriving, they tied in with the Task Force Leader, a Skidgine Operator and an Engine Crew. Before engaging with the Skidgine the squad performed a heavy equipment safety briefing. After generating a plan of action, the Skidgine moved up the fireline to a flat section where the squad could start mopping up above the Skidgine.

Once the Skidgine Operator had engaged the brake system and put the front blade down, he left the cab to start the pump. Almost immediately, the Skidgine experienced a brake failure and began rolling down the fireline. It free-wheeled backwards 50-75 yards downhill toward a group of firefighters working at the bottom of the hill. The Skidgine hit several trees on the way down, finally coming to rest after uprooting a 6-8 inch DBH tree.

The Skidgine never rolled over and there were no injuries. The Skidgine was removed from the fireline and parked at staging.

## **Lessons**

### **What was Done Well**

- Personnel were briefed prior to engaging on the fireline with heavy equipment.
- Equipment was disengaged from the fireline after the incident.
- Maintenance was performed on the Skidgine braking system.
- An operational check was completed with the IC before it was returned to service.

### **Contributing Factors**

- Equipment operators had switched the day prior.
- Tank and pump design on the Skidgine only allow it to be facing uphill when pumping.

### **Recommendations**

- When working with heavy equipment, ensure a safety briefing is completed.
- Ensure operators have had time to become familiar with equipment prior to tactical engagement.
- Ensure inspections are completed prior to use.

**Submitted By**

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