

# Rapid Lesson Sharing

**Event Type:** Loaded Transport Strikes Tree

**Date:** August 30, 2017

**Location:** Whitewater Fire, Oregon

## **NARRATIVE**

Dozer 13 had previously been assigned to the Whitewater Fire and was returning after taking two days of R&R. The two operators had a very early start (0300) to arrive at the fire in time. They were unable to get all the way to the main fire camp due to a new fire blocking the road. They made contact with the fire's overhead and were told to report to McCoy Camp.

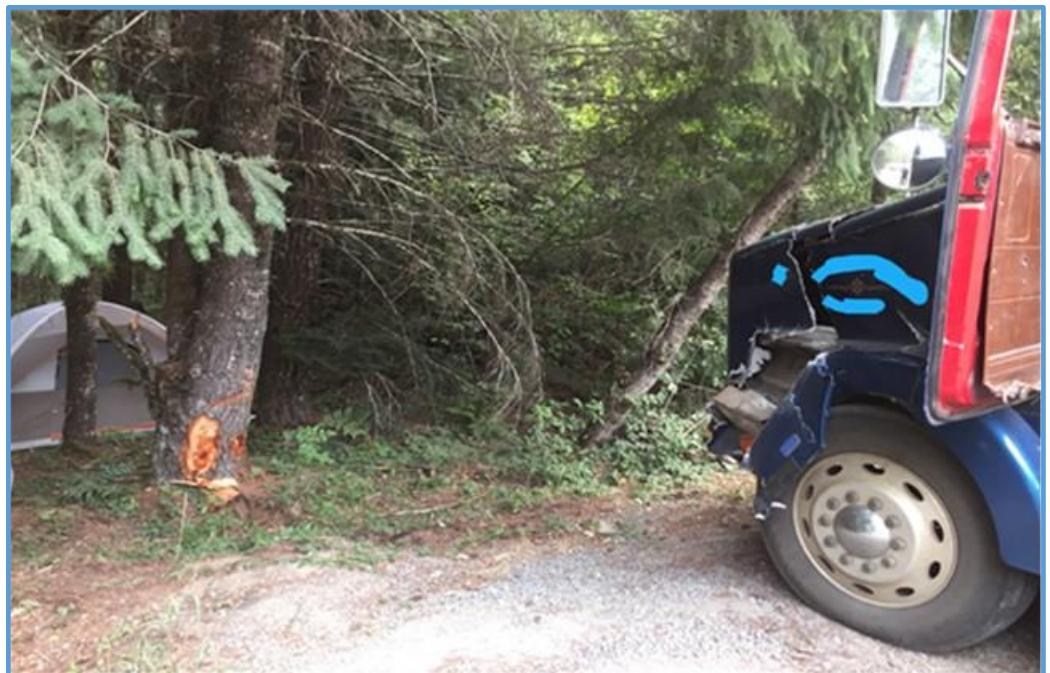
At McCoy Camp they were assigned to Division H. They traveled to Division H and were then told to report to Division O. They traveled to Division O and went to work. They worked until just before sundown. They then loaded the dozer onto the transport and returned to camp.

### **Back and Forth: Frustrating**

As the two dozer operators tried to enter camp with their dozer loaded onto their transport, they were told they could not park in camp and must go up another road and find a place to park. They turned around and headed



Photos show the tree that this truck struck—and the resultant damage to tree and truck.



toward the indicated road. However, because the turn onto this road was too sharp, they had to drive past it until they could find a place to turn around. They finally returned to the road that they were told had available parking space. It was now approximately 2130. All this back and forth was frustrating.

They drove up this road and turned into the parking area that had been described to them, a large gravel parking lot. But it was full of vehicles. Tents were scattered among the trees along all edges of this parking area.

Seeing no opportunity to back the transport up, the operator decided they had no choice but to nose into the only available spot. The ground seemed level enough.



The buttons for the truck parking brake and trailer brake controls are located side by side.

Directly in front of this selected parking spot were two trees. Two tents had been placed on the other side of these two trees. The operator set the brake and the two headed to dinner before the kitchen closed. They returned after dinner and got ready for bed. One operator slept in the truck's sleeper cab.

Sometime between 2230 and 2300, the loaded transport rolled forward. The front driver's side bumper and tire struck the first tree near the tents—which stopped the truck.

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***On this transport, there is both a parking brake for the truck and one for the trailer brake. The operators involved suspect that—for some reason—only the trailer brake had been set. The trailer brake is not designed for long-term parking.***

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#### **Theory: Only the Trailer Brake had been Set**

No one knows for sure why the truck rolled forward.

On this transport, there is both a parking brake for the truck and one for the trailer brake. The operators involved suspect that—for some reason—only the trailer brake had been set. The trailer brake is not designed for long-term parking. It happens to be an air brake system that will slowly “bleed” and become ineffective. The parking brake is intended to be used for long-term parking. The brake engagement controls are right next to each other.

More than likely, a simple mistake was made in only pulling the trailer brake. It is also possible that both of the brake buttons were engaged while the operator was moving around in the cab getting ready to sleep—and the operator might have unintentionally released the truck's parking brake button. No one knows for sure.

The operator who parked the truck has been driving big trucks like this one for more than 34 years—successfully setting the brakes an uncountable number of times. In this instance, a lack of experience does not apply.

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**LESSONS**

Fatigue and frustration is a dangerous combination. We all have those long days with multiple inconveniences. We don't know for sure, but it's quite possible that these two operators' long day, combined with a series of irritating circumstances toward the end of their long shift, contributed to a minor slip in pulling the wrong brake. We've all been there.

The lesson is in recognizing the situation *while you are in it*.

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***What can you do to identify the increasing potential for minor misses as fatigue and frustration escalate?***

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What can you do to identify the increasing potential for minor misses as fatigue and frustration escalate? Can you set trigger points for a “mental” tactical pause? If you find yourself cussing under your breath it might be time to pause and reset!

It doesn't take much slope to put a heavy load in motion. Chalk blocks are designed for this very situation—use them.

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**This RLS was submitted by:**  
**Incident Overhead**

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