

Rapid Lesson Sharing

Event Type: Masticator Rollover

Date: August 24, 2022

Location: Four Corners Fire
Payette and Boise National Forests
Cascade, Idaho

Road Shoulder Collapses – Causing Masticator Rollover

Overview

At approximately 1820 on August 24, an excavator with a masticator head experienced the collapse of the roadway's downhill shoulder and rotated halfway over onto the steep downhill slope.

A Heavy Equipment Boss (HEQB) and this excavator with masticator head had worked together for four days removing roadside vegetation. The HEQB described the Masticator Operator as *“good and skilled”*.

The Masticator Operator had just repositioned the masticator. The machine was stationary on the road. The Operator raised the boom and rotated inward toward the road's uphill side to continue the vegetation removal—when the road/shoulder suddenly gave away.

This caused the masticator to tip onto its side and slide downslope approximately 40 feet, where the cab came to rest against a tree—preventing any farther downslope sliding or rolling.

Just previous to this rollover incident, the HEQB had walked approximately 300 feet up the road from where the masticator was working. Next, the HEQB received a radio call from the Masticator Operator stating that he: *“needed a little help”*.

The HEQB walked back to find the Masticator Operator down off the slope standing beside the rolled-over machine. There were no injuries or significant damage to the Masticator.



Masticator on its side, where the tree, located 40 feet below the road, prevented the machine from sliding or rolling farther down the hill.



Area of road that gave away. Note the vegetation covering the road's shoulder.

The HEQB confirmed that the Masticator Operator was uninjured, then notified the Division Supervisor (DIVS) who subsequently notified the incident's Communications.

The Safety Officer (SOFR) assigned to the Division and an Incident Management Team Safety Officer Type 2 (SOF2) responded to the site for further investigation.



View from the air of the masticator rollover scene.



The road where the masticator was working. Notice the crack in the road's right side and the overgrown vegetation along the road's right shoulder.



Visible cracks can be seen in the road's downhill side. Vegetation hides the shoulder.

Lessons

- ❖ Wear your seatbelt.
 - The operator was wearing his seatbelt—a lap belt—which possibly prevented serious injury.
- ❖ When scouting roads, look for more than the obvious.
 - Cracks or small fissures could be clues to unstable roads and the potential for sections of the road to sluff or break away under stress or added weight.
 - Vegetation can conceal road shoulders which could be unstable and/or have softer soil.

- ❖ Discuss non-medical and out-of-the-ordinary Incidents Within an Incident (IWIs) and have plans in place.
 - Had the operator been unrestrained, or the masticator had rolled farther down slope, or the operator had been trapped, heavy extrication and technical rescue would have been required.

This RLS was submitted by:
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