

# Rapid Lesson Sharing

**Event Type:** Vehicle Rollover

**Date:** September 15, 2022

**Location:** Moose Fire  
Salmon-Challis National Forest  
Idaho

## Lessons from a Vehicle Rollover Incident

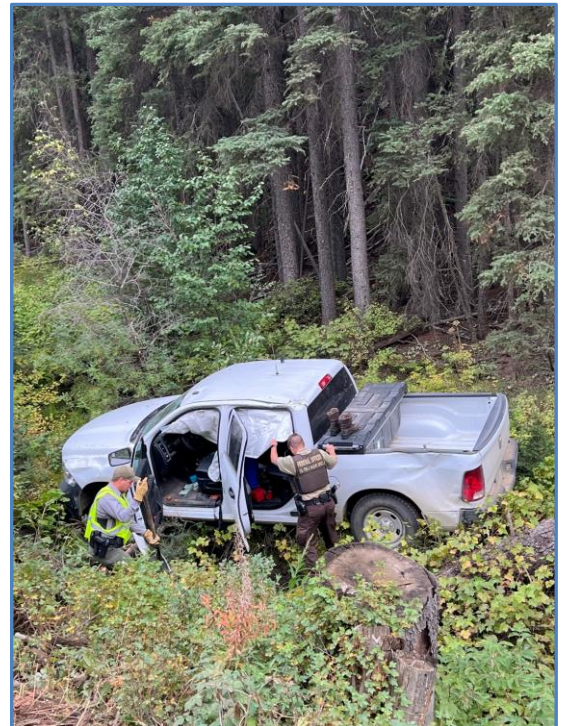
On September 15 at 1718, a motor vehicle accident was called into communications on the Moose Fire by a security resource assigned to the fire who happened to drive by soon after the accident.

The accident, which occurred on Forest Road 101 just east of Moccasin Creek, involved a U.S. Forest Service employee who was traversing the area traveling in a Forest Service vehicle from a neighboring fire. The driver was scouting an alternate route for local fire resources to use for returning to the town of Salmon.

The driver was moving slowly on this recently graded forest road. He was pulling off to the right shoulder of the road while simultaneously reaching and looking toward his phone. His intention was to get to the side of the road. He should have waited to reach for the phone until after the vehicle had stopped.

As he was reaching for his phone, the right front wheel caught the shoulder, which was softer than the driver expected. The tire was pulled into the soft dirt and down the embankment.

The driver tried to accelerate and turn out of the roll—to no avail. The truck then rolled over a stump and landed upright in a small creek.



The truck's right front wheel caught the recently graded forest road's shoulder. The vehicle rolled over a stump and landed upright in a small creek.

### Sequence of Follow-Up Events

Initially, the security person who reported the accident was unable to reach Moose Fire communications on the radio. After driving a short distance up the road, they were able to hit the repeater and relay the information into communications. The initial report came across as a vehicle accident with no injuries, with the driver "up and walking around".

At 1725, the Division/Group Supervisor Trainee who was working in the area, requested that the Safety Officer assigned to that Division respond to the accident.

At 1739, a medic who was staged at the nearby spike camp arrived at the accident location to provide support as needed. At this same time, the paramedics who were staged in that area also arrived on scene to offer assistance. One paramedic stayed to assist; the second paramedic was sent back to the staging area.

At 1743, the Division/Group Supervisor Trainee arrived and took command of this Incident Within an Incident (IWI).

There was a fair amount of confusion at the Incident Command Post regarding the nature of this vehicle rollover accident. The IWI was initially reported as simply a vehicle accident, not a rollover. It was around 1745—almost

one half hour after the accident occurred—that this incident was correctly communicated to the ICP as a vehicle rollover.

A Forest Service Law Enforcement and Investigations (LE&I) Officer also arrived at approximately 1745 and began an investigation into the accident. The driver provided the LE&I Officer with the following statement from notes on his phone:

*“1700 about, accident. While east bound on the fs101 road just past the junction with moccasin creek, I looked down to check the map on my phone to make sure I was traveling the right direction. I slowed and pulled to the right and the embankment gave out. I was traveling approximately 15 mph. The mission was to recon the road system back to Salmon in case the road was blocked on the Salmon.”*

Around 1752, the driver was transported to the local hospital in one of the incident ambulances for further evaluation. He was released with no serious injuries.

#### **A Unique Incident**

This was a unique incident in that this was a firefighter from a neighboring incident who was traveling through the Moose Fire area.

While the firefighter was not directly working on the Moose Fire, the Type 1 Incident Management Team (IMT) on the Moose Fire was scheduled to assume command of this nearby incident at 2000 that evening.



**Tire tracks are visible where the truck's wheels were pulled off the shoulder into the “soft” dirt—and the vehicle rolled down the embankment.**

### **What Went Well**

- ❖ The driver was utilizing their seatbelt and the vehicle safety systems worked as designed.
- ❖ There were several medical resources nearby that provided timely assistance.
- ❖ There was a Safety Officer and LE&I nearby to provide aid.

### **Challenges**

- ❖ The initial communications were challenging. This may be due to location or an improper radio setting.
- ❖ There was confusion surrounding the severity of the event given that the driver was uninjured.
- ❖ The Medical Incident Report was not used. This may be because confusion existed as to who “owned” the IWI, due to the fact that the driver was a firefighter on a separate incident traveling through the Moose Fire area.

## Lessons

- ❖ Beware of soft shoulders. Assume that gravel roads will have soft shoulders.
- ❖ Check in with adjacent fires when traveling through that fire's area.
- ❖ This incident reaffirms the need to use the Medical Incident Report. It is designed to help clearly convey necessary information in a standard format to expedite the medical response and get the appropriate medical care to the patient as quickly as possible.
- ❖ Provide accurate details when reporting the nature of accidents. This accident was not initially reported as a rollover, but as a simple vehicle accident. More accurate reporting would have reduced confusion.

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**This RLS was submitted by:**  
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