

Rapid Lesson Sharing

Event Type: Vehicle Fuel Tank Puncture

Date: August 31, 2025

Location: Goose Fire
Gifford Pinchot National Forest
Washington State

Upon inspection, the operator located a nickel-sized, triangular puncture in the tank, with gasoline actively spraying from the opening . . .

Having basic supplies such as earplugs, towels, and tape on hand can be critical for temporary fixes in remote areas.

The Story and Lessons from this Fuel Tank Puncture Incident

Background

The 2023 RAM 2500 truck that was involved in this incident had no reported issues with its fuel tank prior to this event.

On August 31, 2025, at approximately 1815 hours, while departing the Goose Fire after completing the second and final shift, the driver was operating the assigned 2023 RAM 2500 on Forest Service Road 060. The Fire Suppression Module was split, with four crew members riding in this Forest Service vehicle during the incident.

In an effort to avoid a large pothole, the operator drove over a stick/object approximately four inches or less in diameter that was located across a portion of the roadway. The operator intended to straddle the object with the tires, avoiding the pothole and staying completely on the road surface.

Unbeknownst to the operator at the time, this object shifted upward and punctured the vehicle's fuel tank.

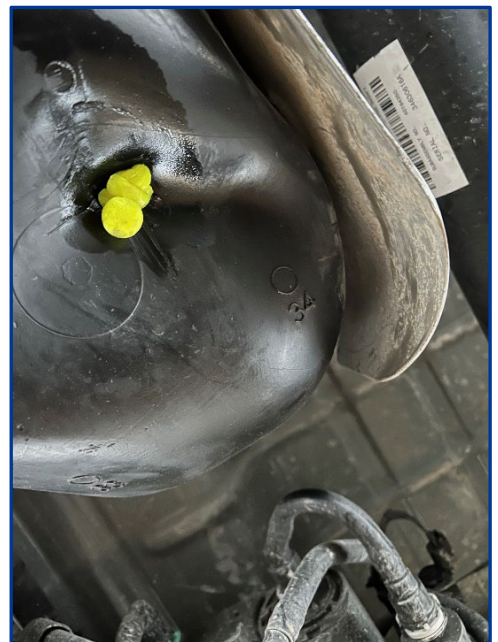
The operator was first made aware of this issue when they stopped at a Forest Service gate and the vehicle behind the operator observed and reported that fuel was leaking. Upon inspection, the operator located a nickel-sized, triangular puncture in the tank, with gasoline actively spraying from the opening. The operator estimated that approximately half a gallon of fuel was lost.

Immediate Actions Taken

- ❖ Safely shut down the vehicle and had all occupants exit.
- ❖ Implemented a temporary field repair to control the leak using five earplugs, a towel, and fiber tape (see photo above). This repair was successful in halting the leak long enough to safely transfer all fuel from the tank using a hand pump.



Top Photo
The punctured hole
in the fuel tank.



Bottom Photo
The temporary field repair to stop the fuel
leak was successfully accomplished using
five ear plugs, a towel, and fiber tape.

Follow-Up Actions

- ❖ Once the fuel was fully removed, the vehicle was secured and left in place overnight.
- ❖ The following day, the vehicle was towed to a Dodge dealership in The Dalles, Oregon, for assessment and repair.

Lessons

Stay Aware of Road Hazards

Even small objects on the roadway can cause significant damage if not avoided properly. Regular scanning of the road ahead can help prevent such incidents. It may also be worth the time and effort of stopping to move an obstacle in the road (branches, rocks, etc.) rather than risk incurring damage from running them over.

Act Quickly and Safely

Immediate shutdown and evacuation prevented potential injury or fire hazard. The improvised repair minimized fuel loss.

Prepare for Field Repairs

Having basic supplies such as earplugs, towels, and tape on hand can be critical for temporary fixes in remote areas.

Coordinate with Support

Prompt notification of the vehicle dealership and towing service ensured efficient resolution and vehicle recovery.

Retrofit with Skid Plate

Perform preventative maintenance via retrofitting all potentially affected vehicles with skid plate(s).

This RLS was submitted by:

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