

National Park Service Incident Report:

DATE: 9/30/25

INCIDENT TYPE: Water Tender Rollover Crash

INCIDENT NUMBER: AZ-GCP-000597

INCIDENT NAME: Dragon Bravo Fire – Type 3 IMT

DATE of EVENT: 9/27/25

TIME of EVENT: Approx. 1315 hours

A water tender working the Dragon Bravo Fire was involved in a single vehicle rollover. While driving a recently maintained road, the north bound water tender moved to the right side of the road while driving to provide room for another vehicle to pass southbound. The rear wheels of the tender began to sink into the soft shoulder. The driver felt the sinking and began steering the vehicle out of the soft road material. The rear wheels began coming out of the soft material, they struck a culvert catch basin which “launched” the fully loaded tender out of the ditch causing the driver to lose control. The tender crossed the dirt road and entered the opposite ditch where it began to roll onto the drivers side. The momentum of the vehicle caused it to roll onto its drivers side and the deep borrow ditch on the opposite side of the road caused it to roll completely onto its top. This event caused significant damage to the cab and tank of the vehicle. Another fire resource soon came up on the incident and made contact with the driver who was trapped in the cab but essentially uninjured. The first on scene firefighter could not contact the ICP or Dispatch with their handheld radio from the location. The firefighter used a Starlink to make a call for the IWI. Even the Starlink satellite link was spotty, but the IMT responded to the scene.

The Driver was able to exit the vehicle by “squeezing through a hole in the cab”. The doors and side windows were inoperable, and the vehicle was on its top. The responding firefighter used a McCloud to excavate soil from around the hood of the vehicle to provide more room for the driver to exit. The vehicle was stable with no risk of further movement.

Key Points from the incident:

- When radio’s fail to work due to dead spots the use of satellite (Starlink) communications greatly assisted getting additional help to the scene.
- The incident was reported as a low-speed rollover but still resulted in significant damage to the cab. Teams should make plans for providing extrication for a motor vehicle accident to access trapped patients.
- Firefighters at all levels in the organization could come across an accident scene. Knowing how to find key information such as phone numbers and the communications plan in the IAP greatly assisted in getting additional help to the scene.
- The driver of the tender was wearing a seatbelt.

Contact Mack McFarland – NPS Wildland Fire Safety Program Manager
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Figure 1: Picture of water tender on its roof with damage to the cab and driver side of the tank.



Figure 2: Picture of displaced gravel in the road showing where water tender sank into right side of road and final resting place after rollover



Figure 3: View looking South of the water tender on its roof in the south bound ditch demonstrating how difficult it was to access the driver compartment due to brush and slope.



Figure 4: Picture of water tender back on its wheels showing significant damage to the cab