

Rapid Lesson Sharing

Event Type: Water Tender Rollover

Date: July 25, 2026

Location: Fox Fire, Oregon

The Story and Lessons from this Water Tender Rollover

On the evening of July 23, 2026, a lightning storm in eastern Oregon started multiple fires. At 1100 hours the next day, an Incident Management Team took command of the Fox Fire as this incident entered an extended attack phase.

The town of Huntington, Oregon, was the closest community to the fire. The structures along Snake River Road were in Level 3—Go Now!—Evacuation. This location is within the Huntington Fire Department (HFD) response area.

On July 25, a day of high fire activity along Snake River Road, the local HFD Water Tender, the Rangeland Fire Protection Association (RFPA)ⁱ, and several residents were in the area as the Fox Fire burned toward this road.

At approximately 1200 hours, there were several vehicles on Snake River Road. The HFD Water Tender—not assigned to the Fox Fire incident—was supporting the community within the department's response area. The Water Tender was attempting to turn around while responding to the Fox Fire's threats to structures located along Snake River Road.

While backing up, the Water Tender's rear passenger tires went slightly over the road's edge, pulling the vehicle off a 15-20-foot-high embankment. In the subsequent low-speed rollover, the Water Tender rolled once, landing on the driver's side.

The Water Tender tank functioned like a roll cage for the cab, providing a place of refuge for the driver. The driver was unable to open the driver's door. With assistance from the crew of a nearby engine—assigned to the Fox Fire—the driver exited the vehicle by climbing out through the front windshield window.

The driver was immediately assisted by this engine's crew. An assigned Fox Fire ambulance and medical personnel evaluated the patient and transported him approximately 20 miles from the scene to Huntington where he was transferred to an air ambulance that flew the driver to a hospital in Boise, Idaho.

The driver's injuries included a broken arm and some minor cuts and bruises.

Lessons

- Use a spotter or backer when turning around on narrow roads—carefully assessing the width and stability of the turnaround area and, whenever possible, choosing a safer location to turn around. Having a backer assist the driver can help reduce the risk of backing too close to road edges.



- Whenever possible, try to back the vehicle so that the rear wheels are on the uphill side. Backing uphill is safer because it provides more stability for the vehicle and reduces the risk of sliding or rolling over the edge. When turning around on a roadway with a drop-off, always position the vehicle so you can clearly see the hazard, or *"Face the Danger."* This means the driver should be looking directly toward the embankment or cliff while maneuvering, rather than having the hazard be out-of-sight behind the vehicle. This approach also helps the driver judge distances more accurately and stay aware of any risks as they turn around.
- Look for a wider area or a driveway to turn around.

This RLS was submitted by:

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ⁱ An RFPA is a volunteer-based organization made up primarily of ranchers, farmers, and other landowners that engage in fire suppression, often alongside other fire response organizations. These groups have the training and legal authority to respond to fires on private and state lands in areas of Idaho, Oregon, and Nevada.