

Rapid Lesson Sharing

Event Type: Water Tender Tip-Over

Date: July 25, 2026

Location: Scorp Fire; Murphy, Idaho

The Story and Lessons from this Water Tender Tip-Over Incident

Narrative

At approximately 1633 hours, a water tender en route to the Scorp Fire via an unimproved dirt road—the primary access route—slowly tipped-over onto its passenger side. While the operator wasn't wearing his seatbelt, due to the slow nature of this tip-over incident, he only received minor injuries.

The tender had unknowingly punctured an outside passenger-side dual tire due to sharp rocks. The tire separated from the wheel about 2.3 miles from the maintained gravel road. After continuing another 0.3 miles, the operator attempted to avoid T-posts in the middle of the roadway (strong metal stakes shaped like the letter "T" that are driven into the ground—see photo on right) by moving onto a soft moon-dust shoulder—and the vehicle slowly tipped over.

A heavy engine arrived within 15 minutes, assessed the operator, and notified the Incident Commander. In this quick medical assessment, a minor shoulder injury was identified. Engine crew members e transferred the operator to a local law-enforcement UTV for transport off the fire to the town of Murphy about 6-7 miles away. The operator was then taken by local EMS ambulance to a hospital in Nampa about 30 miles away and treated for his minor injuries.

Notable Factors

- The operator was unaware a tire had blown and separated.
- Five responding vehicles experienced flat tires travelling on this same unimproved road during the incident's first operational period.
- The failed tire was manufactured in 2014. While it appeared serviceable during visual inspection, tire age may have contributed to this failure.
- T-posts placed in the center of the road forced the tender onto the soft shoulder.

After losing the tire—without the operator's knowledge—he continued another 0.3 miles, where the tip-over occurred.



The T-posts (on left) that the water tender operator tried to avoid by driving over onto the soft moon-dust shoulder—and the vehicle slowly tipped over.



The outside passenger-side dual tire was punctured by sharp rocks and separated from the wheel.



What Went Well

- The operator drove at an appropriate speed for the conditions, preventing additional damage or serious injury.
- Engine crew members and local first responders provided quick and decisive actions resulting in rapid patient care and extraction from the fire.

Lessons Learned

- Conduct thorough vehicle inspections before travel. Ensure that tires meet manufacturer and agency requirements.
- Understand the limitations of your vehicle and equipment. Evaluate whether your vehicle is suitable for the assigned routes and terrain.
- Select travel routes that match your vehicle's capabilities. Note that soft shoulders have a proven tendency to collapse under the weight of a vehicle, especially a heavier vehicle, and lead to rollover accidents.
- Wear your seatbelt. The water tender operator in this incident was not wearing his seatbelt. He was fortunate that due to the slow nature of the tip-over, he only sustained minor injuries.
- The combination of a missing tire, uneven terrain, and unstable road surface led to a slow tip-over.

This RLS was submitted by:

Travis Carlson, Mike Hislop and Alex Cox

Do you have a Rapid Lesson to share?

(<https://lessons.wildfire.gov/submit-a-lesson>)

**[Share Your
Lessons](#)**