

Rapid Lesson Sharing

Event Type: Vehicle Fire

Date: Nov. 16, 2016

Location: Forest Road, Arkansas

NARRATIVE

It is approximately 1445 hours. An employee is performing field work in a 33-year-old pine plantation. Leaf litter, pine needles, and some grass cover the ground. The weather is clear, the temperature is 84 degrees, with a humidity of 27 percent.

Realizing that more time is needed to finish the work, the employee decides to return to the office. All related tools and gear are secured in the vehicle for transport. The employee enters the vehicle (a 2011 Jeep Liberty/2WD/RWD), secures the seatbelt, and starts to drive away.

While asking for help on the radio, the employee turns around toward the vehicle and sees flames under the front end.

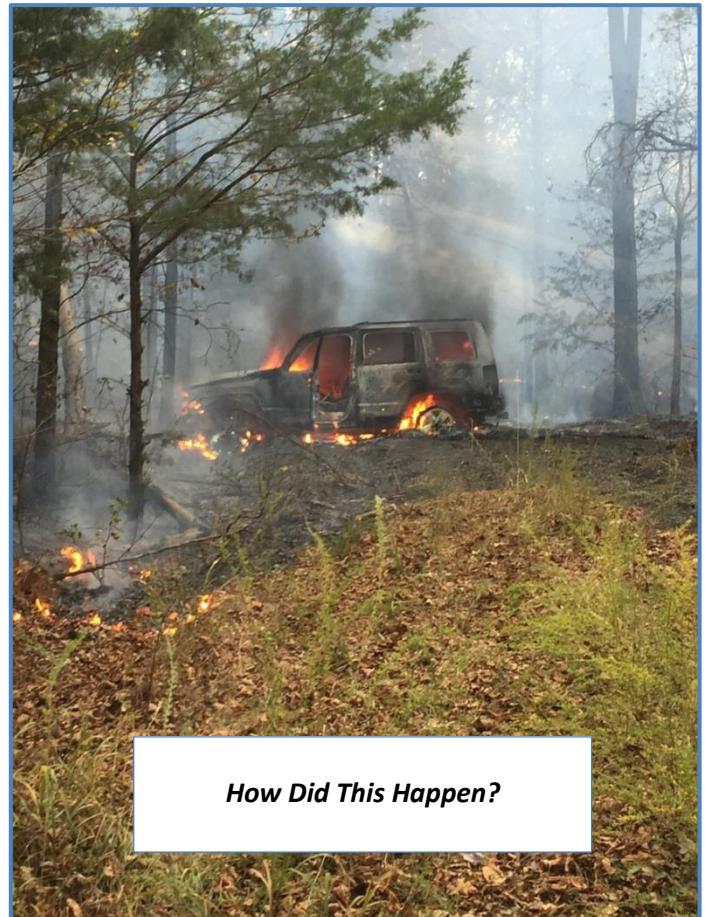
Vehicle Gets Stuck in Ditch

The employee needs to turn the vehicle around to head in the opposite direction. There is a wide spot in the road that can accommodate this. The employee decides to perform a three point turn. While attempting this turn-around maneuver, the vehicle's front tires drop into a ditch that is approximately one-foot deep and two-feet across.

The ground clearance on this particular vehicle is 7.8 inches and the tread on the tires are not very aggressive. The Jeep's bottom A-arm becomes lodged in the ground and the vehicle becomes high-centered on the exhaust pipe.

The employee tries several times to back the vehicle out of the ditch. But with most of the weight on the front wheels, the back wheels only spin in place. Realizing that the vehicle is not coming out of the ditch, the employee decides to call for help.

The employee can't hit a repeater on the vehicle radio so tries to do so on their handheld. By walking eastward, the employee eventually makes contact with the District Office. While asking for help on the radio, the employee turns around toward the vehicle and sees flames under the front end. The employee quickly relays to the office that the vehicle is on fire.



Fire is Consuming Vehicle

The employee has a shovel and tries to throw dirt on the plastic around the wheel well that is on fire. At this point, the employee realizes the actual tire is on fire and is starting to burn other parts of the vehicle. The employee quickly retrieves their gear from the vehicle and moves a safe distance away—to avoid fumes, heat, and the possibility of flying material.

The LEO arrives first, followed soon after by the fire crew. The quick action of the employee to call for help along with the rapid response of the fire crew, keeps the fire spread to a minimum.

No one sustains any injuries during this incident. While the vehicle was a total loss, it can be replaced.



LESSONS

1. Always make sure your vehicle matches the task at hand.
2. If space is limited to turn around, try and find a better place. If none is available, use great caution—especially when fuels are dry and dense, and low humidity is present.
3. Do a complete walk-around before performing a turn-around to look at hazards and ground conditions.
4. Use the Life First motto of “STOP, THINK, TALK—then ACT.”
5. Remember your fire extinguisher. If not blocked and can be used safely, it performs better than other materials.

THINGS DONE WELL

1. Quick action by employee to pull out of area and call for help.
2. Quick response time by LEO and fire crew.
3. Fire crew making sure area was suitable to enter.
4. Reporting out to leaders quickly.
5. Leaders passing information on to supervisors and safety personnel.
6. Open and honest communication about incident. This excels the learning process.

This RLS was submitted by:

Safety Officer

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