

Lessons Learned

Water Tender Roll Over



Date/Time: 1200 hours, May 25, 2007 on the Bolli Incident
Location: Forest Road 35N18, Shasta-McCloud Management Unit, Shasta-Trinity National Forest
Driver: 60 year old male, EERA contractor water tender driver (E-41)
Purpose: WT-E-41 was assigned to watering Forest Road 35N18, the main access route to the fire, for dust abatement.

Narrative: The Type II water tender was traveling at an estimated 5 – 10 miles per hour on a slight uphill grade on a straight section with good site distance when the driver's side tires left the hardened road surface, collapsing the road edge and causing the vehicle to roll and slide down the embankment approximately 200 feet. No other vehicles were involved. Environmental and equipment factors do not appear to have been causal factors. The travel wear surface of this Maintenance Level 2 road was approximately 11 feet wide. The road surface was dry and the surface was flat and well graded with no out sloping.

The driver was 6 hours into the 12-hour shift, and had recently taken breaks. He reports not being fatigued or distracted. The driver left the traveled roadway and got too close to the edge. The driver attended daily briefings and received the IAP's with Safety Messages which focused on driving safety.

The driver was ejected during the rollover and suffered lacerations to the head and a broken thumb. The water tank was separated from the chassis and the truck cab was sheered off.

California Highway Patrol and USFS Law Enforcement reports are pending.

Lesson(s) Learned:

- Even at slow speeds, things can go wrong.
- Heavier vehicles will be at greater risk on soft shoulders.
- Take full advantage of the inside (uphill) road edge.
- Keep your wheels on the traveled roadway: don't be the one to "test" the shoulder.
- Know where your wheels are. Are mirrors adjusted so that you can see your right rear tires?
- Maintaining Situational Awareness is not just for the fire line.
- Stay rested and focused on the driving task, it will allow for quicker reaction time.
- Don't get complacent about a familiar task or section of road. Overconfidence means you are underestimating risks and hazards.
- Your best judgment and attention are always required when behind the wheel.