

# Rapid Lesson Sharing

**Event Type:** Dusty Road Vehicle Accident

**Date:** Aug. 11, 2014

**Location:** Snag Canyon Fire, Washington State



## NARRATIVE

The handcrew worked its first night shift on the Snag Canyon Fire on August 10, 2014.

The crew was assigned the task of holding the line while another crew burned out. After the burn out operations, the crew patrolled and secured the line for the rest of the night. Everything went as planned and the crew felt good about returning to ICP in the morning to get some sleep.

*“If it can happen to me,  
it can happen to anyone.”*

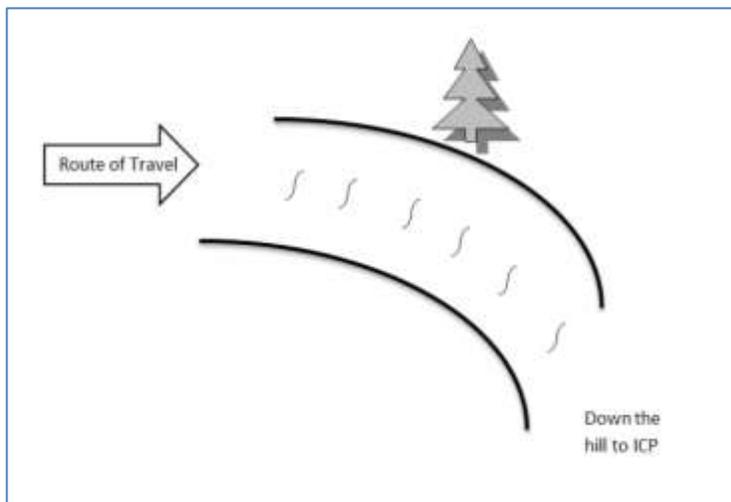
**Driver of Truck #3**



*Damage to the driver's side of Truck #3.*

Around 0730, the crew gathered up and distributed themselves among four different vehicles. They convoyed out together with many of the incident's other resources.

After a short time of driving down a gravel road, the driver of Truck #3 realized the dust on the road was getting worse. He checked to see that he had a good following distance between his vehicle and Truck #2—but, nonetheless, the dust from the vehicles just seemed to hang in the air.



*Basic illustration of accident site. Wavy lines denote washboards.*

Next, this gravel road took a slight turn to the right, with a downhill slant. The road's washboards began to get pretty bad. (See illustration on left.)

### Saved by the Tree

The following events all happened at once.

As the driver pressed on the brakes to slow the vehicle to navigate the turn and to see better through the dust, the vehicle began to vibrate and shake as it floated across the washboards toward the outside of the road.

When it got to the other side of the road, the soft gravel of the road edge grabbed the truck's tires and pulled it off the road.

As it left the road, the truck slammed into one of the few trees along the road, shattering the driver's side window.

The vehicle slid along the tree and came to a stop. If it wasn't for the tree, the truck could have gone off the road and down the steep slope—approximately 30-50 feet to the bottom.

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**The driver described being afraid to move or turn the tires for fear of dislodging the truck and going off the edge.**

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*Closer view of damage to driver's side of Truck #3.*

By the time Truck #4 (which was following Truck #3) came around the corner, the accident had already occurred. The truck was teetering on the edge, held in place by the tree.

The passengers slowly got themselves out. The driver stayed in the vehicle while it balanced on the road edge against the tree. The driver described being afraid to move or turn the tires for fear of dislodging the truck and going off the edge.

After approximately five minutes, another vehicle from the resources leaving the Division pulled Truck #3 off of the tree. The crew limped the vehicle back to ICP where they reported the accident to their overhead.

### LESSON

Be aware that anything and everything on the road—like dust, washboards, or gravel—could be a hazard to your driving.

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#### Submitted By:

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Wildfire Coordinating Group



Pacific Northwest Wildfire  
Coordinating Group

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