Rapid Lesson Sharing

Event Type: Skidgine Rollover

Date: Aug. 11, 2014

Location: Fifteen Cent Lake Fire, Oregon

Est. 2002

"Sitting in the seat, inside the equipment, the slope appears less than it really is. Your perception changes from what the operator sees and what the guy on the ground sees."

Skid #1 Operator

"I am so glad I had my seatbelt on and an "Oh S" handle to hang on to. All I was thinking was keep your hand and feet inside the vehicle at all times. The last thing I wanted to do was lose an arm."***

Skid #2 Operator

NARRATIVE

On August 11, 2014 a lightning storm rolled through the eastern high desert of Oregon and sparked the Fifteen Cent Wildfire. The fire started on the bottom 1/3 of the slope and was making a run to the top when it was spotted and reported to the dispatch center by a government agency engine on patrol.

Following local dispatching protocols, a group of local resources staged in the area were dispatched for Initial Attack. This group of resources included two contracted skidgines (Skid #1 and Skid #2) from the local area.

Resources arrived on site at 1500 hours, anchored in on a dry lake bed, and started mobile attack up slope on the south flank of the fire—using the two skidgines supported by crewmembers off agency engines.

Decision Made to Turn Skidgines Around

The skidgines were working in tandem and progressing well up this 30-35 percent slope that had several loose rocks varying in size—from basketball to truck tire-size rocks.

As the skidgines were crawling up and over these rocks, the rocks would become dislodged—making for difficult traction. Some of the rocks were big enough to change the angle of the skidgines.

As the skidgines got around mid-slope, the slope increased to 40-45 percent. Both operators and the Heavy Equipment Boss (HEQB) agreed that the slope was getting too steep for their operation. The decision was made to turn the skidgines around and support the engine crewmembers with water for bladder bags.

At this time, Skid #1 was out of water. Once turned around, Skid #1 was to return to the bottom of the hill to refill with water while Skid #2 was to turn around, become stationary, and support the engine crewmembers. Skid #1 got turned around and headed downhill.

"Our training with the Medical Incident Report "9-Line" really helped us to know our roles and responsibilities within our crew and made us more proficient during a medical incident."

Engine Captain

(Medical Incident Report is located on pages 108-109 in the 2014 IRPG)

Skid #2 Rolls Five Times

At 1830 hours, Skid #2 followed Skid #1's tracks to the turnaround and got pointed downhill. Skid #2 dropped his blade for more stability and to anchor himself to the hill. Skid #2 then noticed he was not completely pointed downhill. In case the fire flared up below him, he wanted to make sure he was pointed directly into the black—the safety zone.

Skid #2 started to adjust the back end of the skidgine to be fully pointed downhill when several rocks kicked loose and rolled out from under the rear tires. This action changed the ordination and angle of Skid #2, jarring it toward the front right tire (the downhill side)—causing Skid #2 to rollover.

Skid #2 rolled five times before coming to rest on its right side, approximately 200 feet down slope. When Skid #2 stopped rolling, the operator immediately jumped out of the skidgine, under his own power, and ran clear of the machine—thinking it might roll again.

"I was shaking so bad, I couldn't find the "9-Line" in the IRPG. It needs a tab or needs to be someplace easier to find. Once the EMT opened his IRPG right to the "9-Line", I was like, duh, there it is."

Heavy Equipment Boss

Medical Emergency

The HEQB yelled at the Skid #2 operator to sit down and stop moving. HEQB then called the IC over the radio, declaring the need for medical to respond to a skidgine rollover on the fire's south flank. The engine crews that were working with Skid #1 and Skid #2 had two EMTs who witnessed the rollover. They responded quickly and were on site within minutes of the rollover.

The IC of the fire then declared a medical emergency over the radio to all personnel on the fire. The IC also called the local dispatch center on a cell phone, declaring a medical emergency and requesting an ambulance be dispatched. Due to the fire's remote location, it took just over an hour for the ambulance to arrive.

Transported to Local Hospital

The two EMTs completed a full assessment of the Skid #2 operator, including a second assessment of the spine. The HEQB and the EMTs were discussing how to carry the Skid #2 operator off the hill without the proper equipment on site.

Skid #2 operator then informed that he was able to walk off the hill. The two EMTs assisted him down the hill to an agency truck waiting just down slope. He was then loaded into the cab of the agency truck and drove down to the paved road to meet the ambulance.

Skid #2 operator was then loaded into the ambulance and transported to the local hospital (an hour and a half away) for evaluation and treatment. Skid #2 operator was treated for minor injuries (scrapes and bruises) and released that night. Two days later, Skid #2 operator was back on the fire to assist in the retrieval of Skid #2. He was still experiencing some minor muscle soreness.

LESSONS

- **<u>Always remember: Skidgines are NOT dozers</u>.**
- You may be operating within the slope capabilities of the equipment but big, loose rocks change the slope percentage each time you go over one, making the slope much steeper within a two-foot area.
- HEQBs and Equipment Operators need to stop just short of the limitations of the equipment and the operator to allow for an extra margin of safety.
- Not all skidgines are built the same. Skid #2's tank was positioned higher than the tank on Skid #1—changing the center of gravity and making Skid #2 more top heavy.
- HEQBs and Equipment Operators need to keep in mind the effects that rocks and uneven terrain have on the stability of the equipment. If this had been the exact same slope but without all the loose rocks, the skidgine would likely not have rolled over. (The rocks kicking loose from under the back tires caused Skid #2 to rollover.)
- Make sure items in the cab are secure to handle a rollover. Items such as tool boxes, fire extinguishers, and floor plates. If they are not secured, these things could hurt you more than the rollover.
- When possible, allow personnel who are not emotionally tied to the incident to take the role of Incident Commander of an Incident-Within-Incident. This may not be possible on initial attack fires with few resources. In addition, responders need to recognize when the IC has an emotional tie and when others need to step in to ensure the best care of the injured parties.

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