

Rapid Lesson Sharing

Event Type: Water Tender Close Call

Location: Soberanes Fire, Division UU

Date: 8/30/16

“In a situation like that—just stop and get help.”

Water Tender Operator

NARRATIVE

A Water Tender was full of water and headed to Division UU on a stretch of road he had already been up and down several times. The operator was intentionally staying in the middle of the road due to the presence of tire-damaging rock near the inside edge. As he approached a slight curve in the road (see photo on right) he had no special concern—and then he felt the right rear duals give way.



Rapid Extraction Module Responds to Help

The Water Tender Operator immediately stopped and assessed the situation. “I got out of the truck to assess the problem. I dumped the water to lighten the load and lower the center of gravity,” he explains. The operator then notified his Taskforce Leader of the predicament and continued to survey the scene. “As I walked around, I noticed all the dirt of the road edge was uncompacted fill,” he says.

The Task Force Leader and Task Force Leader Trainee arrived within minutes. The TFLD-t notified the Division Supervisor of the situation. DIVS parked up from the scene and held traffic. A Rapid Extraction Module (REM) assigned to the area heard the radio traffic and responded to the area to offer assistance. The REM suggested stabilizing the truck with some of their equipment which they were able to do relatively quickly.



In discussion with everyone on scene, the Water Tender Operator quickly agreed that the best option was to pull the truck out with a bulldozer.

As it became apparent to the the Division Supervisor that this operation would last some time and still involved significant risk, he decided to designate it as an “Incident Within an Incident” (IWI).

“This was a minor situation with the potential to become disastrous.”

DIVS UU Trainee

The IWI would be overseen by the Task Force Leader Trainee and would involve the REM, the Water Tender

Operator, the Bulldozer, and a Safety Officer.

Plan Discussed and Devised for Tow Operation to get the Tender Back Up onto the Road

The Water Tender Operator worked closely with the Dozer Operator to plan and set up the tow. They used a tow strap rated at 80,000 pounds as their primary connection and a tow chain as the back-up (connected to the axle of the tender). Everyone involved discussed in detail exactly how the operation would play out. The Water Tender Operator needed to get back in the tender to guide and control it as it was pulled out.

The REM equipment stabilizing the back end of the tender was set up so it could be fed through while the tender was pulled out—like a climbing belay system. With everything set up and everyone briefed on the plan, the Tender Operator got back in the truck.

The dozer ended up pulling just a bit before the Tender Operator let the clutch out all the way. The dozer pulling the dead weight of the truck snapped the back-up chain as the tow strap stretched. As the Tender Operator let the clutch out, the truck pulled smoothly onto the road. Everyone sighed in relief.



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Watch a video of the dozer pulling the tender out:

https://youtu.be/GF52Nnd65_U



LESSONS

- ✓ We often think of using the “Incident Within an Incident” structure only for medical incidents. This instance shows its usefulness in other types of situations.
- ✓ The Division Supervisor knew the TFLD-t was on scene so he felt no urgency to get to the site. He decided to park his vehicle up from the scene to block the road from additional traffic and walk down. This helped to keep the area clear. Don’t create urgency if there is none.
- ✓ Freshly graded roads can be deceiving. The area that gave way was a natural drain area that had been filled in with dirt but not packed down. This gave the appearance of solid ground when it was not at all solid.
- ✓ There was a clear chain of command but everyone worked together and contributed their area of expertise to collectively resolve the issue. Remember to listen when collaborating.

This RLS was submitted by:
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