

# Rapid Lesson Sharing

**Event Type:** Vehicle Collision

**Date:** June 12, 2017

**Location:** Dead Dog Fire, Colorado



## NARRATIVE

On June 12 at approximately 1341, a two-vehicle collision occurred on Rio Blanco County Route #1, eight miles northwest of Rangely, Colorado during an active burning period on the second day of the Dead Dog Fire.

The collision involved a Government Owned Vehicle (GOV) operated by GOV Truck-1, and a Privately Owned Vehicle (POV) operated by a member of the public not associated with fire suppression. The two vehicles collided at low speeds. Both received damage to the front driver's side corner panel.

## Factors Involved

### **Physical Environment**

- Fire was actively burning on both sides of Rio Blanco County Route #1.
- Fuel Type: greasewood, cheatgrass and a minor amount of Wyoming sagebrush.
- Smoke made visibility very limited.
- Weather conditions (from DRAC2 RAWs) supported active fire behavior:
  - 1318 Hours – Temperature 78 degrees, Relative Humidity 10 percent.
  - 1318 Hours – Wind observations: 32.01 mph average out of the SSW with gusts up to 55.01 mph.
  - 1418 Hours – Temperature 80 degrees, Relative Humidity 9 percent.
  - 1418 Hours – Wind observations: 30.0 mph average out of the SSW with gusts up to 59.99 mph.



#### **Fire Environment**

- Multiple fire incidents in the area.
- Radio traffic for several incidents were concurrent and consistent.
- Limited resources available due to other activity in the area.
- Fire threatening the Blue Mountain community.
- Fire was on both sides of the road and actively running NNE, toward Blue Mountain.

#### **Notes**

- GOV Truck-1 was towing a trailer with a UTV.
- According to the driver of Engine-1, who was immediately following GOV Truck-1, GOV Truck-1 was moving at speeds less than 5 mph.
- Because radio traffic indicated the road was closed and due to the fire behavior conditions, GOV Truck-1 did not suspect there was any traffic traveling southbound on this road.
- GOV Truck-1, Engine-1 and Chase Truck-1 were traveling north on Rio Blanco County Route #1 to limit fire spread northbound toward the Blue Mountain community.
- Both vehicles involved in this collision had after-market grill guards or “cattle catchers” installed as front bumpers.

### Description of Incident

- GOV Truck-1 was traveling northbound less than 10 mph and, due to low visibility, was in the process of stopping.
- POV was traveling southbound.
- GOV Truck-1 moved approximately 20 inches into the left (oncoming) lane to avoid heat, smoke and driving off the pavement.
- At approximately 1341 Hours, GOV Truck-1 made contact with POV. Both vehicles made impact with left-front corner panels.
- Both vehicles became immobile.
- All occupants evacuated the scene due to dangerous conditions. Occupants left in two separate GOVs that were following GOV Truck-1 (Engine-1 and Chase Truck-1).
- Medical Emergency personnel were requested and sent.
- POV occupants refused medical care.
- Both operators were interviewed by Law Enforcement at a later time.
- No citations were issued.



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### Recommendations

- ❖ Given the challenging conditions that surrounded this incident, it is difficult to criticize actions or give recommendations.
- ❖ One can learn from experiences even in a scenario that is dictated by natural conditions with a minor amount of human decision-making.

### Lessons

- ❖ Close roads to public traffic early. However, keep in mind that this could be problematic when resources are limited and the definition of “early” is not well-defined in an emerging incident. Additionally, smaller spur roads that branch off from the main roads present traffic control difficulties in such limited time restraints.
- ❖ Obey all traffic laws, even in difficult or unexpected conditions.

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**This RLS was submitted by:**  
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