



BUREAU OF INDIAN AFFAIRS

Incident within an Incident, (IWI) *Lessons Learned Review*

Silver Creek Motor Vehicle Accident

Williams Flats Fire - August 12, 2019

SUMMARY OF INCIDENT

On August 12, 2019 at approximately 7:00 p.m. near the end of their shift, fire resources assigned to the Williams Flat Fire completed their daily After Action Review (AAR) and began driving back to the Incident Command Post (ICP). At 7:35 p.m. incident communications received a call from the Division Group Supervisor stating a vehicle accident had occurred and an Incident within an Incident (IWI) was taking place.

A Type 2 hand crew's vehicle (4x4 pickup), pulling a trailer and UTV, traveling on a well maintained dirt road, left the roadway and traveled approximately 125 feet down a steep embankment (~50% slope), impacting a large tree near the bottom of a drainage. The impact injured all four firefighters within the vehicle.



*Vehicle traveled 125 feet before impacting a large tree at the bottom of a drainage.
Photo by: BIA*

Advanced medical personnel, also traveling from the AAR, arrived within 10 minutes of the accident occurring and performed a medical assessment and began assisting with getting firefighters to definitive care as quickly as possible. One firefighter was airlifted to an advanced care medical facility in Spokane, Washington. The medical transport helicopter, which was not assigned to the incident, landed on the same road the vehicle was traveling.

The remaining three injured firefighters were transported by vehicle to a local medical facility where they were evaluated. Later that evening, an additional firefighter was transferred to Spokane for further evaluation.

The remaining two firefighters were released home.

After accident notifications were made, the Bureau of Indian Affairs conducted a Lesson Learned Review (LLR) to document future lessons to share with the wildland fire community.



Photo shows the direction the vehicle was traveling prior to the accident.

The parked truck shows where the vehicle left the roadway.

Photo taken August 20, 2019, eight days after accident occurred.



Visual from roadway overlooking the drainage the vehicle traveled down.

Notice the slope steepness (~50%) and the direction of travel.

Also visible is the hand line the fire crew constructed to assist with packaging and transporting the firefighter 125 feet up to the roadway.

PURPOSE

The purpose of a LLR is to focus on the near miss events or conditions in order to prevent a potentially serious incident in the future. To learn from our near misses and successes, it is imperative to conduct a LLR in an open, non-punitive manner. LLRs are intended to provide educational opportunities that foster open and honest dialog and assist the wildland fire community in sharing lessons learned. LLRs provide an outside perspective with appropriate technical experts that assist personnel with identifying conditions that led to the unexpected outcome and sharing the findings and recommendations.

FINDINGS

1. The four-passenger UTV was secured to the trailer utilizing only the front winch of the UTV. No other tie-down straps were used to secure the UTV to the trailer.
2. Three of the four passengers were wearing seatbelts.
3. No documentation regarding UTV training or trailer towing was available for review and "UTVO" UTV Operator was not listed on red cards. Individuals involved were not aware of the requirement to complete UTV training.
4. Multiple vehicle occupants stated that speed, complacency, and fatigue may have been contributing factors.
5. The road was well maintained; however, the road was "wash boarded" when accident occurred.
6. The crew traveled this road multiple occasions prior to the accident occurring.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Implement programmatic trailer towing training annually to all drivers who will tow a trailer, with emphasis on how to secure loads.
2. Implement annual driving policy, per BIA Driving Policy, and ensure all drivers are approved to operate a vehicle. Ensure all training is documented and documentation is available for compliance review.
3. After successfully completing UTVO training, document it and ensure it is listed on individuals red card, per Chapter 14 of the Interagency Standards for Fire and Fire Aviation Operations.
4. Ensure medically trained personnel are equipped with the appropriate gear, commensurate with the training and scope of work. Backboards are not required gear, but many crews elect to carry a type of backboard to assist with patient transport.

COMMENDATIONS

1. The crew had a pre-established plan to manage an IWI and executed the plan appropriately.
2. The crew successfully used the Medical Incident Report (MIR)
3. Outstanding onsite coordination between the two crew members, trained as Medical Incident Technicians (MITs), was instrumental to the timeliness and efficiency of patient care.
4. The expedited medical transport was a result of the coordination between the IMT and available resources. The IMT facilitated use of a medical transport helicopter, not assigned to the incident which successfully reduced the transport time it took to deliver the patient to advanced medical care.
5. Only 48 minutes elapsed from the time the IWI was reported to the time the firefighter was transported to the advanced medical care facility.
6. The Hospital Liaison in Spokane was exceptional and provided timely assistance to the seriously injured firefighter.
7. There was a timely request and response to provide peer support services to the firefighters.
8. Northwest Regional Office and Colville Agency personnel provided excellent support to the injured individuals and the LLR team.



The UTV impacted the rear of the pickup truck.



Damage to the rear of the pickup truck showing where the UTV impacted after departing trailer.

Gear in the bed of the truck damaged the truck box upon impact.



Damage resulting from impact to tree, which was approximately 28" diameter at breast height (DBH).



Damage to UTV.

NOTE the winch cable, only mechanism utilized to secure UTV to trailer, snapped on impact.



Damage to trailer.

NOTE the winch hook and remaining section of snapped cable.



Movement of UTV upon impact.



Medical and fire personnel on scene.

NOTE the condition of road near the time of incident.

LESSONS LEARNED REVIEW TEAM MEMBERS

Team Lead: Troy Phelps, Acting Regional Safety Manager, BIA Rocky Mountain Region

Technical Specialist: Paul Ryan, Regional Fuels Specialist, BIA Eastern Region