



This Day in History is a brief summary of a powerful learning opportunity and is not intended to second guess or be judgmental of decisions and actions. Put yourself in the following situation as if you do not know what the outcome will be. What are the conditions? What are you thinking? What are YOU doing?

Stanza Fire Engine Rollover – July 28th 2002 - California

Incident Summary: July 22nd 2002 a lightning strike starts a fire in Stanza Creek on the Klamath National Forest. The area is steep, rugged and has limited access. Slopes range from 40 to 90%, with rock outcroppings and talus slopes. Roads are narrow and winding, often with precipitous drop-offs. The lack of access precludes efficient use of heavy equipment such as bulldozers.

At 2146 July 25th an engine (E-11) from Lassen NF is ordered as a part of a strike team assigned to the Stanza Incident. The engine module is composed of an Acting Captain (experienced qualified engine operator), Senior Firefighter (Acting Engineer trainee), and 3 firefighters. The Acting Captain and Acting Engineer are the only licensed drivers on the module. E-11 is a type III engine with a manual transmission. For operation of this type and size of engine a Commercial Driver's License (CDL) was required. The Acting Engineer had recently received a Class B learners permit. This allows the trainee to get driving experience while accompanied by a fully licensed driver with the same type of CDL. The license is restricted to automatic transmissions only. To get experience, the Acting Captain has the Acting Engineer do most of the driving.

July 26th 0830 -The module departs their home base, ties in with the strike team, and arrives at the Stanza ICP around 1600. Indirect strategies had been effective in securing line along existing roads. Safety concerns included steep, inaccessible terrain, rolling rocks and debris, burning snags and narrow roads.

1800 night shift 26th-27th -The strike team is assigned to support a burnout operation along a road, and after a briefing, depart for the fireline.

The road, normally 14 feet wide, has since been narrowed by falling debris from the fire above the road to 10-12 feet wide. The road is a winding, dead-end road, 0.7 miles long with a native soil surface. There is a steep drop off on one side. The Acting Captain informs the Division Supervisor that he has a fairly inexperienced driver and it is agreed that the engines will only be used when needed and that, due to the narrowness of the road, they will drive the length and turn around at the ends.

0630 July 27th – E-11 is released from the fireline and off duty at fire camp at 0900. They had been on duty for 24 hours.

1730 night shift 27th-28th – The engine module is assigned to patrol the same location for night shift.

0120 – A water tender drives the narrow section of road that E-11 had been patrolling and reports that his rear tire was directly at the outside edge of the road as he moved over to drive around firefighters on the inside of the road.

0200 – E-11 makes another pass on the road. E-11 approaches the firefighters on the side of the road, and like the water tender, moves over. (The firefighters would later report that the engine seemed unusually close to the outside edge of the road). The rear tires slide off the

side of the road and E-11 plunges 1059 feet down the steep hillside killing 3 firefighters and injuring the other 2.

Lessons Learned Discussion Points

We all function in the capacity of "trainee" many times in our careers. On-the-job training is a necessary and valuable part of our learning.

- *What can you do to help ensure that your trainee opportunities are challenging and a success?*

Many fireline situations are challenging and in an unforgiving environment.

- *As a supervisor what can you do to set your trainees up for success?*

Of the dual tires that slipped off the road first, the inside tire had significantly less tread than the other tires (less than the acceptable standard). There is an entry in the vehicle log book that the left inner dual needs replacing.

- *For your crew, what is the protocol to follow for documenting and correcting a deficiency in your crew vehicles?*

The length of duty time for drivers for the 26-27th exceeded the standard driving duty limitation of 16 hours with 10 hours driving. Both drivers of E-11 exceeded the driving limitation by 8-9 hours.

- *If you or your crew are being asked to exceed your duty limitation, what do you do?*

At the rollover site the road is only 27 inches wider than E-11.

- *When you and your crew are faced with a situation that has a very narrow margin for error, what are some of your options?*

Resources [Stanza Fire Engine Rollover Investigation Report](#)
[6 Minutes for Safety discussion "Driving Safety"](#)