

Scenario #1

Date & Time of Incident: July 30, 1995 at 10:30 a.m.

Location of Incident: Aberdeen, Mississippi

Number of Firefighter Fatalities: 1

The Incident:

The 29-year old firefighter was the driver and sole occupant of a water tanker responding to a mutual-aid request for assistance at a barn fire. He was not wearing a seatbelt at the time of the incident.

A witness who was following the tanker reported that the apparatus was proceeding at an estimated speed of 65 miles per hour. The vehicle was seen to go off the right side of the roadway, come back onto the road, than roll over at least three times. The driver was ejected from the vehicle during the rollover.

A nurse who came upon the scene started CPR. Medical care was continued on the way to the hospital, but the driver was pronounced dead shortly after arrival there. The cause of death was listed as internal injuries.

Significant Causal / Severity Factors:

- Excessive speed
- Failure to wear seatbelts
- Fatally injured individual ejected from the apparatus
- Wheels left the right side of the road
- Over-correction when attempting to bring the right wheels back onto the road surface

Scenario #2

Date & Time of Incident: April 8, 1996 at 9:36 p.m.

Location of Incident: Moses Lake, Washington

Number of Firefighter Fatalities: 1

The Incident:

The 19-year-old firefighter who was fatally injured was the driver of a 3,000-gallon tanker responding to a structure fire. The right-front seat was occupied by another firefighter. Neither firefighter was wearing a seatbelt at the time of the incident.

A local bridge was out of service for repairs, so the response route taken to the fire was unfamiliar to both firefighters. The fire chief, who was following the tanker in his vehicle, was more familiar with the route. As the tanker approached a curve, the fire chief realized that the driver was accelerating, and ordered the tanker, by radio, to slow down. The order came too late, and the tanker entered the curve at a speed estimated to be 40 to 60 miles per hour. The posted recommended speed in the curve is 35 miles per hour.

The tanker skidded, rotated counter-clockwise, and then left the right side of the roadway. The tanker rolled first onto its right side, then onto its roof. The cab was crushed as it slid for a distance, and the tanker rolled again and came to rest on its left side.

The fire chief and another chief officer who was riding with him immediately requested assistance. They found the passenger attempting to self-extricate and helped him out of the vehicle. They had a great deal of difficulty removing the driver due to his position in the cab of the truck. He was eventually removed with the help of a passing motorist. CPR was begun immediately and continued while the driver was transported to the hospital. The driver was pronounced dead shortly after his arrival at the hospital. The cause of death was listed as a lacerated heart and major blood vessels.

Significant Causal / Severity Factors:

- Excessive speed
- Failure to negotiate a curve
- Failure to wear seatbelts
- Failure to follow posted speed recommendations on a curve

Scenario #3

Date & Time of Incident: October 18, 1999 at 1:54 p.m.

Location of Incident: LaPorte, Indiana

Number of Firefighter Fatalities: 2

The Incident:

The 23-year-old driver and 57-year-old captain were responding in a 2,000-gallon tanker to a mutual-aid brush fire. The driver was not wearing a seatbelt at the time of the incident; however, the captain was properly belted.

The tanker failed to negotiate a curve in the road. The apparatus left the right side of the road and crossed into a cornfield, where it rolled several times. The speed of the tanker was estimated at 55 miles per hour. A caution sign before the curve recommended a maximum speed of 40 miles per hour. The driver was ejected from the vehicle, and the vehicle rolled on top of him. The captain was trapped in the tanker, which was on its roof, until he was extricated by other firefighters.

The captain died on November 4, 1999 (17 days after the incident). He had been released from the intensive care unit to a regular hospital floor. The captain was seemingly well and recovering from his injuries, but he was discovered pulseless and non-responsive. Emergency care was provided but was not successful. The autopsy concluded that the captain died of a cardiac arrhythmia.

The driver died on January 22, 2000 (96 days after the incident), although he had appeared to be making a slow recovery. The cause of death was listed as sepsis.

Significant Causal / Severity Factors:

- Excessive speed
- Failure to negotiate a curve
- Failure to wear seatbelts (one victim)
- Fatally injured individual ejected from the apparatus (one victim)
- Failure to follow posted speed recommendation on a curve

Scenario #4

Date & Time of Incident: November 2, 2000 at 2:30 a.m.

Location of Incident: Overisel Township, Michigan

Number of Firefighter Fatalities: 1

The Incident:

The 41-year-old firefighter who was fatally injured in this incident was the passenger in a 2,000-gallon tanker responding to a mutual-aid structure fire involving a turkey farm. Neither the passenger nor the driver was wearing seatbelts at the time of the collision.

As the apparatus approached an intersection with a stop sign, a pickup truck approaching the intersection from the other street (without a stop sign) was thought by the occupants of the apparatus to be yielding right-of-way to the tanker. The tanker may have slowed before going through the stop sign, but it did not come to a complete stop. As the tanker proceeded through the intersection, it was struck by the pickup at the left rear axle.

The force of the impact deflated the right rear tires of the tanker, and the apparatus began to swerve from side to side. The tanker exited the left side of the roadway, rolled over, and the water tank separated from the chassis. The tanker came to rest upside down, and both firefighters were trapped in the cab.

Firefighters from other departments responding to the fire came upon the accident scene and provided aid. Both firefighters were extricated from the cab. The passenger was pronounced dead at the scene as a result of crushing blunt force chest injuries, with the cause of death listed as mechanical and positional asphyxiation. The injuries to the tanker driver/operator and the driver of the pickup were not life-threatening.

Significant Causal / Severity Factors:

- Excessive speed
- Failure to wear seatbelts
- Failure of the fire apparatus to come to a complete stop at an intersection with a stop signal

Scenario #5

Date & Time of Incident: September 22, 1994 at 7:00 p.m.

Location of Incident: Livingston, Texas

Number of Firefighter Fatalities: 1

The Incident:

The 41-year-old captain was responding to a kitchen fire as the driver and sole occupant of a 3,000-gallon tanker. He was not wearing a seatbelt at the time of the incident.

As the apparatus attempted to make a right-hand turn onto a main road, the vehicle failed to negotiate the turn and rolled twice. The driver was ejected from the vehicle and was pronounced dead at the scene. Cause of death was listed as multiple traumatic injuries. Law enforcement reports cited unsafe speed as a factor in the rollover, even though the tanker's speed was under the posted speed limit. There was also some indication that the driver may have been taking prescription medication that impaired his judgment at the time of the accident.

Significant Causal / Severity Factors:

- Excessive speed
- Failure to wear seatbelts
- Fatally injured individual ejected from the apparatus
- Possible impairment by prescription medication