



LESSONS LEARNED

Minor Injuries Rollover MVA

Date/Time: November 11, 2009 0615 hours

Location: Hwy 299 west, Modoc NF

Employee Titles: (1) Archaeological Volunteer (driver), (1) Archaeological Temporary (passenger).

Purpose: Traveling to Klamath Falls, Oregon from Alturas, California to travel home.

Details: An Archeological Volunteer and an Archeological Temporary employee left the Modoc National Forest Supervisors Office at about 0600 hours traveling to Klamath Falls, Oregon. It was the last day of employment for both and the Volunteer had arrangements to catch Amtrack in Klamath Falls at 0900 hours to travel home. They were driving a 2008 Ford Escape. The vehicle was in excellent working condition with new all weather tires (1 month old). When they left the Supervisors Office, it was still dark and temperatures were below freezing. As the conditions were potentially hazardous, with packed snow or black ice potential on the roadway, it was decided by the two employees to have the Volunteer drive as she was a more experienced all weather driver and the other employee was not much experienced with either snow or black ice. Both driver and passenger were wearing seatbelts. Approximately 10 miles west of Alturas, at a location known as Fishers Hill, the vehicle encountered another vehicle heading east. Pavement conditions were slippery and the other vehicle coming up the hill apparently lost traction and entered the west-bound lane. The FS driver reacted defensively, pulling to the right to avoid direct impact. The FS rig left the road with both front and rear right tires causing the vehicle to spin out and flip on its side, rolling over several times. Air bags deployed and the two occupants were able to exit the vehicle very shaken up but with only minor injuries. The other vehicle did not stop and continued east-bound. The two employees established communication with their supervisor via cell phone. Both occupants were taken to the local hospital for treatment to injuries and for observation. Injuries were relatively minor consisting of small cuts, abrasions, and a broken thumb.

Lesson(s) Learned:

- Seatbelts and air bags save lives and prevent injuries.
- Adjust driving speeds during adverse weather conditions. Slow down as necessary.
- Keep vigilant and monitor other drivers.
- If driving conditions are hazardous (snow, black ice, low visibility) put off the trip until conditions improve.
- Be proactive in making common sense travel arrangements. If forecasted weather conditions indicate potentially hazardous travel conditions for early morning travel, adjust arrangements for travel to occur mid-day or the afternoon before.

Damage to the vehicle was extensive (totaled) and occupants were very lucky to have walked away from this accident with minor injuries.