



LESSONS LEARNED

Injury, Vehicle Off Highway MVA

Date/Time: July 13, 2010 at 1630

Location: Hwy 120, Groveland Ranger District, Stanislaus NF

Employee Title: (1) Wildlife Biologist

Purpose: Returning from lecture in Yosemite National Park

Details:

The employee left the Groveland Ranger District office at approximately 1030 to attend a lecture in Yosemite National Park. He recalled being fatigued all day. After the lecture he had lunch with the presenter and then travelled back to the Groveland District Office, westbound via Highway 120, at approximately 1400. He remembers driving defensively amongst the heavy tourist traffic, and actively rolling the windows up and down and cycling the air conditioner on and off for comfort, but did not notice that he was fading into sleep. He recalls obvious landmarks from the return trip, such as Sweetwater Campground (approximately 5 miles east) and Buck Meadows (approximately 2 miles east) of where the accident took place. The accident occurred approximately ½ mile east of the turn off to the Groveland Ranger District Office. After crossing the east bound lane he remembers going through the vegetation just off the south side of the shoulder, and then suddenly coming to a stop. The vehicle travelled off the highway, through patches of brush, down a steep embankment, travelling approximately 50 feet, hitting a 6 inch DBH oak tree, uprooting it and breaking it in two and coming to a stop after hitting another 28 inch DBH oak. He assumed that he had fallen asleep. He was travelling highway speeds, approximately 55 MPH and was wearing his seat belt. The airbags did not deploy. He removed himself from the vehicle and called Stanislaus ECC at 1627 on his hand held radio, requesting a tow, not knowing the extent of the accident. A fellow employee came with a truck equipped with a winch to help remove the vehicle and saw the magnitude of the accident. He took the injured party back to the District Office, where an ambulance was ordered because the driver was complaining of lower back and rib cage pain. The District Fire Management Officer and Human Resource Specialist were called to act as patient advocates for the injured party at the hospital.

Lesson(s) Learned:

- Wearing seatbelts saves lives and limits injuries.
- If feeling fatigued, determine if the trip is necessary.
- If the trip is deemed necessary, take another person with you.
- If feeling fatigued find a place to pull over and stop.

FSH 12.34.10. ***Pull off the road for a break or to change drivers if you experience any of these warning signs.***

- a. Vehicle begins to feel too warm.
- b. Drowsiness, especially after meals.
- c. Eye strain.
- d. ***Inattention, daydreaming.***
- e. Hallucinations (for example, misinterpreting shadows, reflections, objects on or near road) resulting in an impulse to strongly control the vehicle.
- f. Impatience, irritability not normally experienced.
- g. Stress that results in anxiety, anger, or lack of concentration.
- h. Muscular tension, restlessness, or inability to get comfortable.

FSH 12.31 - Work/Rest Guidelines. Vehicle operators must comply with these work/rest guidelines except for limited exceptions (during the first 24 hours) of emergency driving situations (sec. 12.32).

1. Employees and contractors operating Government vehicles shall drive:
 - a. Only if they have had at least 8 consecutive hours off duty before beginning a shift.
 - b. No more than 2 hours without a rest stop. Operators of vehicles carrying 16 or more passengers (including the driver) shall stop for 10 minutes every hour.
 - c. No more than 10 hours per shift. A shift must not exceed 16 hours, from beginning of shift to the end of shift including rest and meal stops.

- Carry a USFS 2-way radio when going on field assignments.
- Go in and out of service with the local ECC.
- Sign out on the board in the District Office.
- Always seek medical attention after any serious accident.

The occupant of this vehicle was very lucky to walk away from this with limited injuries.

Other thoughts:

Why did the air bags not deploy?

- Ford Motor Company Safety Team is scheduled to investigate the possible problems of why the air bags did not deploy.

He did sign out in the District Office.

- This allowed for personnel accountability at the District.

What's the protocol if someone still shows signed out at the end of the day?

- Each Forest/District should have an accountability protocol for every one of their employees.

Ensure patient has medical treatment.

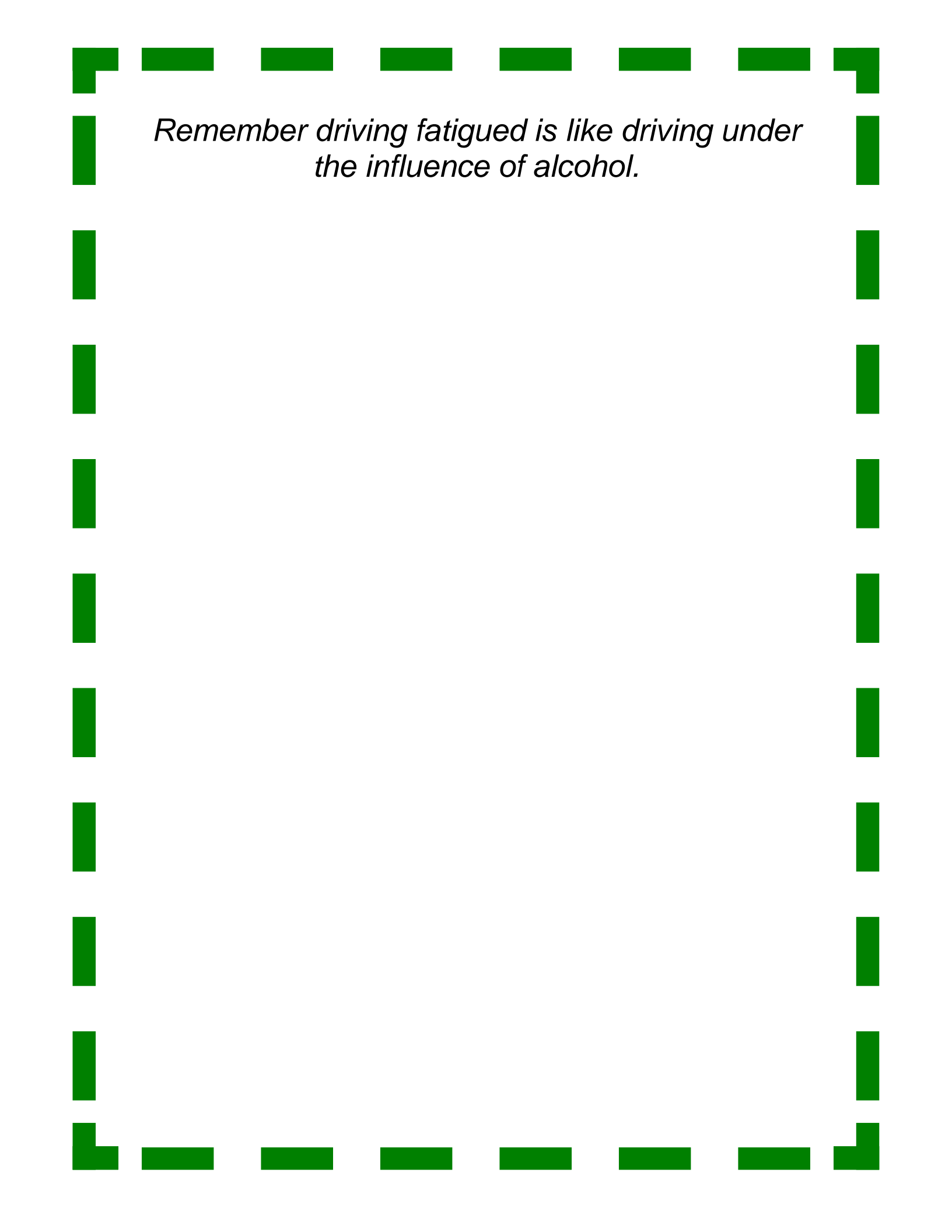
- In the event of a serious accident it is advisable to seek medical attention in a timely manner.

What are the off duty contact numbers for drug/alcohol testing?

- Posted on the ASC, Human Resources Management website:
http://fsweb.asc.fs.fed.us/HRM/employee_relations/drug_testing.php
- USDA, Departmental Regulation, 4430-792-2, "Drug-Free Workplace Program" states,
(5) Employees Involved in Safety-Related Incidents.

(1) Employees in non-DOT TDP=s. Employees may be subject to testing when, based upon the circumstances of an accident, their actions are reasonably suspected of having caused or contributed to an accident that results in a death or personal injury requiring immediate hospitalization, or results in damage to government or private property estimated to be in excess of \$10,000.

Driving is one of the most dangerous activities we do and we must not take this activity lightly.

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Remember driving fatigued is like driving under the influence of alcohol.