



# RAPID LESSON SHARING

Montana DNRC  
(July 1<sup>st</sup>, 2020)

## Summary of incident

### Background:

The Swede Mountain Fuels Project was a hazardous fuels removal project that the Northwestern land Office-Libby Unit and Lincoln County had been working on for close to six weeks. The goal was to create a shaded fuel break on both sides of the Swede Mountain Road, adjacent to other fuels management projects and a subdivision in the area, requiring 14 acres of fuels treatment. The crew had made great progress in the weeks leading up to the incident and was looking to wrap up the project later in the week.

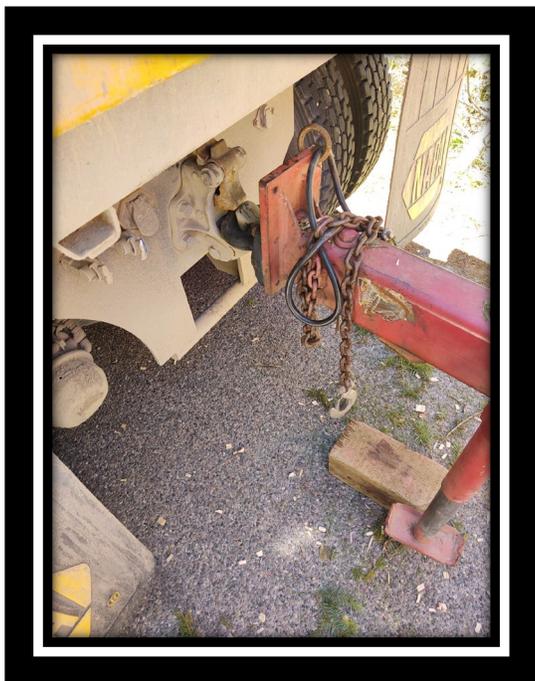
### Events Leading up to I.W.I.:

From the start of the project, the crew was split into two separate chipping groups, running in "hockey shifts". One group would chip with a designated chipper boss who oversaw the chipping operations in the general vicinity of the chipper, while the rest of the crew pulled brush to be fed into the chipper. The second group spread out along the road, in front of the county dump truck and behind the chipper to act as road guards for passing traffic. Once a dump truck had been filled the two groups would rotate, having to un-hook and re-hook the chipper from the dump trucks. On the day of the incident, they were using a block of wood to support the foot of the hand crank jack to provide the height needed to attach the

chipper to the pintle hitch hook on the dump truck.



Chipper used in fuels reduction project



Block of wood used to raise hitch to correct height

### Incident Within an Incident:

At 1300 Crewmember A was assisting the dump truck operator in backing into place to hook up the chipper to the pintle hitch. While backing the dump truck into place, the chipper was bumped by the hitch, jarring the jack off the block of wood, resulting in the jack impacting the top of Crewmember A foot. Crewmember A ran from behind the dump truck, catching the attention of the other crewmembers on the project. The medical lead recognizing what had happened, immediately contacted the Incident Commander of the project, who initiated IWI protocols. The IC of the project shut down all chipping operations, the IC of the IWI contacted dispatch and read the Medical Incident Report

over the radio while the medical lead and an EMT who was operating the county dump truck began patient care. It was determined by the medical lead and EMT that the best method of transport was to use an agency vehicle, with the hospital only 10 minutes away. In total, it took 19 minutes from injury to delivering the patient to the medical care facility.

#### **After the Incident Within an Incident:**

Operations for the day were shut down due to the medical incident, the crew proceeded to debrief and document the events of the day and the incident commander of the IWI transitioned into the hospital liaison for the injured crewmember. The Line Officer, Fire Management Officer and Liaison remained at the hospital until the injured crewmember was discharged, ensuring the proper medical paperwork was complete. The FMO then took their crewmember to the pharmacy to get their pain medication and then home to recuperate. As a result, the injured



**Injury from accident**

crewmember has 3 broken toes and a four-week recovery time before their foot is healed.

#### **What Was Done Well:**

- The use of ICS for non-emergency/project work. Establishing a chipper boss (i.e. Incident Commander) to oversee daily operations.
- The incident command structure and medical plan were defined, and everyone knew their roles and responsibilities if a critical incident took place.
- There was good communication and a thorough plan both for the project and the days operation between all those involved.
- Quick decision making – recognition that the patient needed a higher level of care and quickly determined they could get the patient to the hospital quicker than calling for an ambulance.
- The crew had participated in an I.W.I training the week prior and was still fresh in their minds.

#### **Recommendations/Lessons Learned:**

- The crew had been working on this project for 5+ weeks and put in a long day the prior operational period leading to physical and cumulative mental fatigue. With future long duration projects, look to break up the monotony and provide adequate time for rest.
- Ensure that all participants are included in the briefing. County operators were not included in the morning briefing and communication (hand signals) were not discussed with the operators.
- ***“Nothing fails harder than success”*** - **IC of the IWI.** The hand jack on the chipper wouldn't reach the dump truck by itself so the crew used a block of wood to get the tongue of the chipper up to the level of the dump truck hitch. This deviation from normal operations was overlooked because they had been successful with the first 25 dump truck loads.
  - IC should have 3000' ft. view of the operation to recognize deviations from SOP's and reevaluate safety mitigations when new tactics are deployed.
- Don't let production and your competitive nature of getting things done compromise safety.

**This RLS was submitted by:**

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