

Fairgrounds Tanker Overturns, 1985 - And Some History...

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From the archives of the *News & Observer*, by way of the North Carolina State Archives, come a pair of photos from November 11, 1985. They were taken by Gregory Wiggs, one of two photographers on the scene. Fairgrounds Fire Department Tanker 197 (correct number?) overturned on Blue Ridge Road. The truck was built by Atlas on a Chevrolet Kodiak chassis. What was the model year?

The next day's newspaper ran the picture on the right with this caption:

"Two truck operators attach a chain to a fire truck that had flipped on Blue Ridge Road near the entrance to the N.C. Museum of Art. The Fairgrounds Rural Fire Department truck was extensively damaged Saturday when it hit a curb and flipped after swerving to avoid a small car that had made a U-turn in its path, Raleigh police and witnesses said. The driver of the fire truck, Richard Ernest [Will], 21, of 3616 Blueberry Drive, was treated at Rex Hospital and released. The driver of the car was being sought, police said."

Click to enlarge:



News & Observer photos

Looking across the decades, there have been a number of other apparatus "rollovers" in Raleigh and Wake County. Two have resulted in line-of-deaths, the first for both the Cary and Raleigh fire departments. The most prominent, a tiller accident in 2009, resulted in national awareness of apparatus safety as well as specialized training programs for tiller operators.

The historical list includes:

- Apex - 4/1/78 - Engine 3 (1963 Ford/ALF) overturned on old US 1, serving to avoid a car that had pulled into oncoming traffic. The driver was ejected and nearly killed.
- Cary - 6/16/60 - The department's tractor-drawn tanker (shop-built in 1954) overturned at US 1 onto side road near Meredith College. Both firefighters aboard were ejected. Volunteer firefighters Vernon Lee Thompson was killed and Billy Henderson was transported with minor injuries.
- Raleigh - 7/10/09 - Ladder 4 (2004 Pierce tiller) overturned at Dawson and South streets, while responding to a call. The truck was turning east onto South Street from southbound Dawson Street. The apparatus rolled over into an empty parking lot. Three firefighters were transported with minor injuries.
- Raleigh - 12/7/08 - Engine 9 (2008 Pierce) overturned (onto its side) on St. Albans drive, while responding to a call. There were no injuries to the crew.
- Raleigh - 2/25/90 - Engine 5 (1986 EEI/Pemfab) overturned (onto its side) at Wilmington and Smithfield streets, while en route to the shop at Station 2. Only occupant, the driver, suffered minor injuries.
- Raleigh - 11/14/52 - Engine 6 (1926 American LaFrance, reserve) overturned on Brooks Avenue at Lewis Farm Road. Five aboard, three with minor injuries, plus Captain James White with serious injuries, and Driver Vernon Smith with very serious injuries, including leg amputation. He underwent over two dozen operations before succumbing to his injuries on March 10, 1956. He was the first line-of-duty death for the Raleigh Fire Department.
- Raleigh - 7/29/03 - Hose wagon overturned on New Bern Avenue and Person Street. Three firefighters injured.
- Stony Hill - 2/28/09 - Pumper 264 (make/model?) overturned (onto its side) on Purnell Road while responding to a call. Three personnel

with minor injuries.

- Wake Forest - 12/25/02 - Engine #433 (1996 E-One pumper/tanker) overturned on Ligon Mill Road while responding to a call. The truck slipped off the shoulder, left the roadway, struck a culvert, and became airborne. The truck flipped two and a half times. Firefighter Thomas Howell received the most serious injuries, with a broken leg, arm, and wrist. Firefighter Shawn Thomas was also hospitalized with a broken leg. A third firefighter was treated and released at the scene.

Didn't a Wake-New Hope truck overturn on US-401 at the Neuse river bridge?

jeff - 01/18/15 - 18:02

@jeff, you are correct in your statement. I believe it was Tanker 9. Overturned making a left onto 401 from Mitchell Mill.

Marcus - 01/19/15 - 22:32

Name: (real name
preferred)

E-mail: (optional)

Web Site: (optional)

Remember personal info?

Yes

No

Comment:

/ [Textile](#)

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To prevent spam we require you to answer this silly question

What are the FIRST TWO LETTERS of the word 'fire'?

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Notify: Yes, send me email when someone replies.

Hide email: Yes, hide my email address.

Small print: All html tags except and <i> will be removed from your comment. You can make links by just typing the url or mail-address.