

Yesterday's Apparatus Accident on I-40

03/30/10 231 W - + 11 - 11

Back to present day. Another close call has happened. On Monday morning, about 5 a.m., Cary Engine 1 was reportedly struck while on scene on westbound eastbound I-40, ~~just past the merger with Wade Avenue~~ about 100 yards before the Harrison Avenue bridge. They were blocking for Western Wake apparatus at a motor-vehicle accident. The engine reportedly received a glancing blow from a semi truck. The colliding truck was then struck by a second semi. The crew was aboard their engine, and no injuries were reported. Thank God for that.

The 2002 Pierce Dash pumper was reportedly significantly damaged, and was struck on the passenger-side rear. The engine was poised for replacement with one of three recently delivered 2010 Pierce Velocity pumpers.

This is third close call for firefighters on that stretch of interstate in the last nine months. In October, a Western Wake firefighter was hospitalized after being struck at the scene of a car fire in the westbound lanes just east of Harrison Avenue. In June, a piece of Morrisville apparatus (Ladder 2?) was struck in the rear while blocking at an accident east of Airport Boulevard. Two occupants of the passenger vehicle that collided with the apparatus were transported. No firefighters were injured.

Optional discussion topic for the day. Can the chances for these accidents be any better mitigated? Or with greater traffic comes greater risk, period?

The accident actually occurred on east bound I-40 about 100 yards prior to the Harrison Avenue Bridge. And in June i believe it was Morrisville Engine 1 that got hit. But thanks for making people aware of this reoccurring issue Mike. Remember the importance of a safety engine as well as proper truck placement and position when working the highway.

On scene - 03/30/10 - 20:48

The best course of action would be to inform the public to be alert and simply slow down. Maybe we could get NCDOT to install signs reminding drivers of the the Move Over Law on this particular stretch. Perhaps a higher fine for violating the law.

Beach ([Email](#)) - 03/30/10 - 21:10

Thanks for the clarifications OS. Keep helping me keep honest.

Legeros - 03/30/10 - 21:57

I know this is a little off topic, but a 2002 engine due for replacement already?

harkey ([Email](#)) - 03/30/10 - 22:05

We see it every day. We are on scene and people just will not move over. It is a law with a steep fine, but the police don't stop the cars. I guess because when 10 in a row refuse to move over, who do you pull over.

It's sad. Our EMS compartments are on the Captains side. I have had several close calls just trying to get to that compartment. Even with proper truck placement. People are in a hurry all the time for everything.

not there - 03/30/10 - 22:10

Jeff, the former E-1 was to be placed in reserve for use in the near future as either E-8 or E-4. The new truck that was purchased is the vehicle for Engine 8's slot.

CFP 7021 - 03/31/10 - 02:06

I feel it is unavoidable in this stretch because of how many lanes there are. With 4 lanes of highway shutting one lane down at a non-peak time does not hinder traffic flow. So cars keep driving by at 70+ mph and what happened in all 3 accidents appears to be people rushing up the lane that is shut down and trying to merge at the last second but it being too late. This issue has not been seen on other stretches possibly due to it only being 2 or 3 lanes wide thus when an accident occurs, traffic flow is slowed enough to avoid the scenario that exists from Wade Ave

to the Durham County line. Does anyone know if Durham County or Orange County have had any issues along their respective 4 lane stretched of I-40 in the past year or so?

On scene - 03/31/10 - 08:18

Drivers simply don't care, and probably aren't paying enough (if any) attention to what they're doing as well. They can't be bothered to be slowed down one iota, unless it's they who are pinned in a mangled car, or otherwise jacked up as a result of their poor driving skills and lack of consideration.

BC - 03/31/10 - 11:24

Do some of us chiefs need to get together with NCSHP and DOT/IMAP staff and work more on the highway incident management team concept? Big red trucks work great, but maybe yellow trucks, cones etc could be the first barriers and the BRTs used as the LAST line of defense? It's far and for sure better to damage a truck than to hurt a person, but those are expensive traffic barriers when there might be cheaper alternatives.

That being said, I'd like to personally and organizationally thank every chief who assigns or allows the blocking unit concept, and to every captain and company who puts themselves in harm's way to protect other responders on the highway.

CHIEF100 - 03/31/10 - 15:10

Harkey, maybe they guessed it would be hit on I-40 at a wreck. But that is a bit early for a replacement, even if you do make it a reserve. Does it really run that much??

firelogg123 - 03/31/10 - 18:42

It was most likely going to be moved to E-4 (2000 KME) or go online as E-8 within the next year (it was having to have some work/repairs done before this happened). The new CFD pumpers have dual foam systems on board, which are now all going to be on the interstate access (E-2, E-3, E-1). And yes E-1 is one of the busier engine companies. CFD just put two 1997 Pierces into reserve with the replacement of E-3 and E-7.

CFP 7021 - 03/31/10 - 19:02

I have followed these three incidents, along with others across the country. I don't want to see ANYONE hurt, and I don't want to see anything torn up. But keep this in mind folks-

1. For my firefighting brethren, allow room between your apparatus and the incident for my fragile, aluminum clad ambulance. I would hate to see a semi plowing into an ambulance. It is not going to fare well.

2. For my EMSing brethren, if the blockers are not there or en route, CALL FOR THEM! AND DO NOT TAKE NO FOR AN ANSWER! I didn't. Pissed off the LEO, but my safety is more important than any traffic or other concern he has. My ability to go home at the end of my shift is my main objective. If a particular dispatch point won't dispatch them, call them through the big one. BUT DON'T TAKE NO FOR AN ANSWER! Your safety is your paramount concern. Always.

DJ - 03/31/10 - 20:04

I have always wondered about the feasibility of those "blocking vehicles" seen in work zones. You know, those flat-bed trucks with deploy-able, shock-absorbing crash barriers? Put those in service at stations near interstates. Dispatch with the dispatched unit. Second driver drives, deploys, and joins crew.

Legeros - 03/31/10 - 20:09

Wake SO was hit mid December 2009 between Aviation & Harrison East bound

http://www.wral.com/news/news_briefs/sto..

C.Parker ([Email](#)) - 03/31/10 - 21:58

I know on the beltline (I mean I-440 now) that the IMAP trucks will come out and help with blocking, just gotta ask for them. What I hate is on property damage only wrecks, police don't get a "blocker". It's just our lonely car sitting there to block us and the other motorists from getting plowed in to.

If it's me working the accident and fire/ems show up, then block as much as you want because I also want to go home. It would be nice if we had the man power to send another police unit out to sit and watch for people that don't move over and then go and pull them over...but that is just not feasible. About as close as I get to being able to do that is if I tuck in behind a stopped police car and wait for the next car to pass that doesn't move over, or as I'm clearing the accident waiting for that last car to pass that doesn't move over. Otherwise, we're too busy to be

proactive and sit up on active incidents to enforce the move over law.

Question for you fire folks:

How would you feel if we called for a fire truck to come block on the highway for an accident that was property damage only but were too damaged to move to the shoulder?

RPD - 03/31/10 - 22:37

Chief 100,

Contact me offline at sh_fireinv@hotmail.com regarding your post. There is such a meeting as you are talking about that occurs monthly in Cumberland county. It involves NCOT, NCSHP, FD& EM as well as a few others. If it is occurring here I would "assume" and know what assume means that it is occurring in Wake County. We had actually had some discussion in our meeting regarding IMAP and things of that nature that was done when I was in Wake County. I can get you some contact info for that area.

Scottie

shfireinv ([Email](#)) - 04/01/10 - 07:48

There are such meetings that take place in Wake County already.

CFP 7021 - 04/01/10 - 09:15

@RPD: I personally think it's a good idea for a blocker for you guys in that situation. It could also give the FD a chance to check the vehicles to make sure there isn't a fire hazard or need to clean up the roadway of fluids and debris. That on TOP of providing you guys with some protection.

@Mr. Blogger: Problem with having one of the DOT-type blockers, most if not all departments wouldn't have the manpower to get that vehicle there, nor, I think, would the county or any municipality want to fund one or more vehicles at "that price" that can only do one thing. All our equipment serves multiple purposes. Also, IMO, just putting out those type trucks would only help if it was struck in a rear-end collision. In the WW incident, a blocker may have alleviated the situation. There are too many variables and "what-ifs" associated with getting into that.

It would be nice if IMAP had some quick-response access to one of those type of trucks in this area, or maybe had a quick-deployment setup they could get to within a few minutes. The problem with that is, they would have to be notified.

We ALL need to be aware of apparatus placement (lanes, curves, hills and bridges) along with what side we get off the rig.

And we ALL need to look out for ourselves and our crew. Capt. Mark Hill made a good point last night at the meeting: "If you see one of your crew doing work, WATCH HIS BACK!"

Duda - 04/01/10 - 09:43

7021, when and where are these meetings? I'd love to attend on behalf of EMS.

Olson - 04/01/10 - 20:28

I can find out for you, I know that they currently involve reps from Raleigh FD, Cary FD, Western Wake FD, (maybe Morrisville FD), SHP, DOT, IMAP, etc. They are held on Roscoe Trail at the DOT complex.

I'll try to get the info and contact you offline

CFP 7021 - 04/01/10 - 22:50

Anything can happen and the conditions were horrible, but the only reason 3 lanes were blocked for a minor accident on the shoulder is b/c a certain EMS Agency decided to come up the wrong way on 40 and had to make enough room for them to turn around safely with a pt. on board.....surely hope EMS NEVER TRYS this very dangerous move again, thank goodness no one was hurt!!! On another note, most of us train a lot on positioning...etc, but this accident proves that proper positioning saves lives and DEFLECTS big rigs off your apparatus, crew, and scene! Hope I never have to see this again and a big thank you to CFD for proper positioning!

[nameless] - 04/02/10 - 11:13

Wrong way manuevers are an accepted if infrequent practice for both fire and EMS. And usually done at direction of the IC, no? Your comments point a bit negative direction of the particular EMS crew. Perhaps you really are being critical of the practice in general.

Hold on There - 04/02/10 - 11:31

Speaking of IMAP, IMAP need to get on better terms with everyone and learn to swallow their pride sometimes. While majority of the time IMAP is as helpful as they come, WW 196 and Cary E1 had an IMAP truck drive off the scene of an overturn after getting into a dispute with fire units on scene about 20 minutes into the call. Units were on scene for another 2+ hours. Keep in mind this accident was in the same place Cary E-1 got hit 48 hours earlier. This is simply unacceptable. We all need to work together. Even if it involves getting more PD or more fire units out there, or additional IMAP trucks, we all need to work together because in the end Safety is number 1, not our pride or our name, our safety is!

From the tent in the woods - 04/02/10 - 20:36

EMS went suicide up 40 before any fire unit was there. I believe it to be an accepted practice for EMS when a fire unit is on scene and already has traffic mildly controlled to the point where the road can be shut down so EMS can safely run backwards up the highway. In no way should a small rig like EMS be driving backwards with the conditions and the location being a blind spot just past the peak of a hill without a rig already in place for its own safety.

nameless jr - 04/02/10 - 20:37

@Tent...I was involved in a similar situation as well, where the OIC actually had to get ugly with the dude. It's OUR scene, not IMAP's. The IMAP guy was actually threatening to call the Director of the IMAP program if the OIC didn't listen to him!! I was LMAO! Even more when the OIC said "let me speak to him when you get him on the line".

Here's a topic for discussion involving blocking; should the crew blocking stay in the rig, or get out and stand-by closer to the incident scene? My opinion, they should get out and move up to where the incident is. You're using the blocking apparatus as a first line of defense against some of the idiots on the road, and it's there to take a hit if need be. Why stay on the rig? What's your opinion?

Silver - 04/03/10 - 23:11

Good point Silver. Why would you stay on a rig that's only purpose on that scene is to get hit before the wayward motorist can get into the scene. I say get off and get up the road. At least it gives a few more hands on the scene and put those folks further out of harms way.

Olson - 04/03/10 - 23:22

Procedurally, you should get off the apparatus. Raleigh FD's DOI states personnel will exit the apparatus and move into the "safety zone."

A.C. Rich - 04/04/10 - 07:30

If the folks already on scene ask for blocking only and say they don't need any more manpower, why would you get out and lend a hand? All you're doing is cluttering the scene, adding more confusion for drivers and effectively increasing the number of people who are at risk of being injured by a passing motorist. I'm not saying they shouldn't get out and find a safer area to hang out, but if they are not needed why have them running around? Personally I think it should be the crews prerogative as to which they think would be safer for each situation.

Joey - 04/04/10 - 08:37

Joey, if a tractor-trailer hits the apparatus would u prefer to be in the blocking apparatus or 200ft up in the safety zone with distance and 2 apparatus between? Safety crew should be watching traffic if there is no need for extra hands. I believe they should not be sitting in the blocking apparatus.

gen3fire - 04/04/10 - 09:00

So here is the deal with CFD E-1. If the crew had dismounted the truck they would have been obligated to put out cones. These means putting someone behind the truck to place cones, which means someone would have been dead. Additionally, if anyone had been exiting the truck on the right side, (Captain and FF) at the time of the collision they would have been dead. Luckily, because they didn't exit the rig and kept their seat belts on everyone walked away. There is a fine line on when to place cones and "go to work" versus sit tight and clear the scene quickly as possible. E-1 was under the idea that they would clear the scene as soon as the suicide medic unit got to the scene and safe. This took longer than planned but luckily the blocking concept worked. With every call a decision to deploy will have to be made, go or don't go, just like with every house fire, rescue or recovery. Sometime the decision is right on and sometime it isn't. This time it worked and kudos to the captain for keeping his people safe. All we can hope for is that we practice safety to the best of our ability, make sound decisions based on circumstances that are present and PRAY that God looks after us and its not our time. Stay safe and happy easter, bak bak

Get off the truck? - 04/04/10 - 09:23

Side note for the Cary guys, keep in mind that I'm not criticizing what your guys did on this incident. The debate of "get off or stay on" was hashed out the other day at my firehouse, so it would be good to see other sides.

Silver - 04/04/10 - 10:22

Gen3fire, I agree in most situations that is the best practice, however I don't think there should be a blanket statement saying crews must get

out for reasons such as "Get off the truck?" has posted. Each situation is different, I think it should be left to the discretion of the crew members to do what they feel is safer for a given situation, much like apparatus placement at a difficult scene. Ultimately its the crew members who will be effected by either staying in or getting out, so I think its their choice to make.

Joey - 04/04/10 - 10:58

Just re-iterating the RFD procedure. Situational discretion is important and there is latitude give for officer decision making. Hey, Happy Easter to all and please remember what this day means!

A.C. Rich - 04/04/10 - 11:50

I was just thinking about race tracks and accidents on them. They use yellow lights on the tracks (among other things of course) to warn and slow drivers down. Im sure it would be too expensive to come up with something similar for the Interstates. Maybe a light system along the guard rails that ran off solar power and some way to activate those lights (like a button or switch) that would flash yellow, lets say 2 miles before the incident. This would allow drivers enough time to slow down and be aware of an emergency ahead. Just a Thought! What do you guys think?

Just a Thought - 04/06/10 - 15:48

just remember brothers, "cones are a suggestion, blocking is protection"

Also trucks are designed with systems in place to protect you in collisions, your body is not so fortunate, trust me on that one.

with that said, time to head to my night shift on the I-40 Express...

STAY SAFE!

shevais - 04/06/10 - 16:17

Name: (real name preferred)
E-mail: (optional)
Web Site: (optional)

Remember personal info?
Yes
No

Comment:

/ [Textile](#)

Comment moderation is enabled on this site. This means that your comment will not be visible on this site until it has been approved by an editor.

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.