

Charlotte Ladder Overturns - The Photo

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As news and fire news sources have reported throughout the day, Charlotte Ladder 32 overturned this morning while responding to an emergency medical call. It happened at 8:21 a.m. on Ardrey Kell Road at Bridgehampton Club Drive. That's a residential street in southern Mecklenburg County near the state line.

The four firefighters aboard sustained minor injuries, initially reported as potentially serious. They were reported all wearing seat belts. They were transported to Carolinas Medical Center. The Smeal 105-foot ladder (model year?) was found on its roof, with flames showing from beneath the cab. The fire was reportedly quickly extinguished by an arriving engine company.

Almost immediately, notifications of the accident and incident updates were transmitted by [Carolinas Fire Page](#). In summary, they advised:

- 8:48 a.m. Overturned ladder, extrication underway, plus incident address.
- 8:56 a.m. Unit number identified, two firefighters reported transported with minor injuries, truck on roof, cab on fire.
- 9:26 a.m. Four now reported transported with potentially serious injuries.

WSCO-TV soon posted a viewer photo of the scene, showing the truck on its roof, flames from beneath the cab, and bystanders on the opposite side of the street. (What's the credit for the photo, by the way? Can't find it at present.)

At 8:53 a.m. that image was transmitted via Twitter by [FireNews.net](#) and [Carolinas Fire Page](#). These were followed by subsequent scene photos and incident updates.



WSCO-TV photo

Let's reflect on the first photo, which may be the most powerful apparatus MVC image seen in some time. (For local readers, it recalls Raleigh's Ladder 4 accident in 2009.) Lighting, color, composition and framing are all perfect. And the subject matter itself is a gut-puncher. First, from the emotional perspective, in empathetic response to the condition of the firefighters. Second, from the more... clinical topical perspective. We're seeing something both rare (ladder truck on its roof) and very rare (flames showing from a ladder truck on its roof).

The raw power of the image—both as emotion and information—makes it a perfect candidate for “going viral.” Expect to this one to be shown, re-shown, and re-purposed over the coming weeks, months, and maybe years. And maybe (certainly?) even outside of the fire service. At a minimum, it's a sure to be added to any instructor's slides on the subject of driving safety.

My guess is that the picture will be “the” image of the incident. The one that everyone remembers, and that becomes the iconic visual representation. Did or does the picture also control the story of the story? Need to think on that some. More later, maybe.

Meanwhile, reader's are invited to share thoughts and reactions including:

- The incident itself.
- The firefighters involved.
- The photo or other images from the scene.
- The rapid reporting and transmission of information, via news and social media.
- This post and pontifications therein.

Sources and More Media:

- [Charlotte Observer](#)
- [Firefighter Close Calls](#)
- [FireNews.net](#)
- [Statter911](#)
- [WBTW](#)
- [WSCO-TV](#)

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