

Recap of Tanker Fire Incident July 12, 2003

On Saturday, July 12, 2003, at 1247, there was a tanker fire on I-5 at approximately 44th Street in Lynnwood. The on duty crew was notified of a large plume of smoke to the south by the FAA tower controllers. After verifying the location was off airport, we phoned our fire dispatch, SNOFAC, and offered the assistance of our Foam unit, F26, to the call. F26 is a 1988 Oshkosh with 3000 gallons of water, 410 gallons of 3% AFFF, and a 500 pound Halon ball. They relayed our offer to the south county dispatch agency, SNOCOM, who then offered our capabilities to the Incident Commander (IC).



Photo courtesy of the Everett Herald



The IC requested us and as we responded to the scene we issued an emergency call-back of all available off-duty firefighters to the station. We notified the IC through dispatch that we had a foam trailer at the station to provide a supply of foam to all units on scene if needed. Our foam trailer has 300 gallons of foam in a tank, and 200 gallons of foam in

5 gallon buckets, with the ability to pump directly to apparatus. The IC did request the foam trailer and it was brought to the scene by an off duty Captain who had responded to the station due to the emergency call-back.



Photo courtesy of the Everett Herald

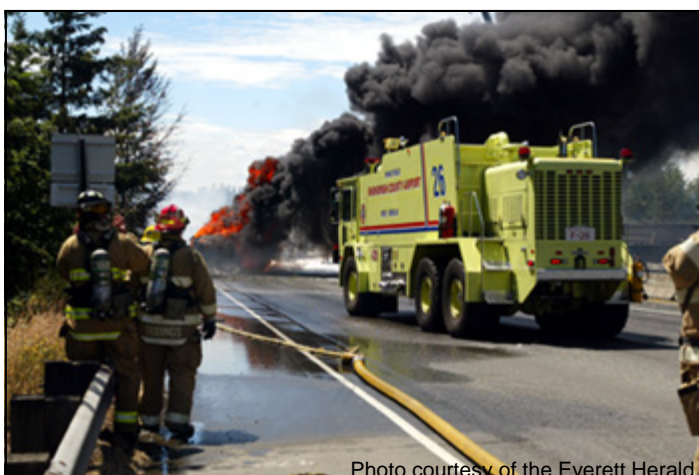


Photo courtesy of the Everett Herald

We responded to the vicinity in the southbound lanes of traffic, having to navigate our way through heavy traffic. We arrived at the same time as a Boeing Fire Department Freightliner tanker, which carries 5000 gallons of water and 600 gallons of 3% AFFF. The north division commander

requested both of our apparatus to travel to the other side of the freeway to approach the scene. Our crash truck was able to back up and go across the median to the northbound lanes of the freeway, and approach the accident site from that direction. Boeing Fire was unable to turn their tanker around, and stated they could reach the fire from their current location with their upper turret. As we arrived, we had a briefing with the IC and the north division leader. We developed a quick plan for our attack.



This attack included having all structural master streams shut down, and a coordinated foam attack with Boeing Fire. While Boeing accomplished about a 50% knockdown on the rear trailer, they were unable to reach all areas of the fire effectively because of distance, wind, and the thermal column from the fire. We attacked the fire using foam with a bumper and roof turret attack. The fire was soon extinguished, using 1500 gallons of water and less than a quarter tank of foam in the initial attack. After

5 reapplications and a few tank refills of water, we topped off our foam tank having used a total of 202 gallons up to that point.

We remained on scene until 2238, continuing throughout the afternoon and evening with re-application of foam. We were utilized as the primary attack unit from the north division of the crash site. F26 also provided safety to all personnel who entered the scene until the fuel was removed from the tanker in the evening.

It was a unique opportunity to provide mutual aid to the rest of the county with the resources that Snohomish County Airport Fire Department at Paine Field has at its disposal. The fire would have had to burn all the fuel up in the tanker, 11,300 gallons of



unleaded gasoline, if foam had not been applied. We were able to get close to the scene and completely extinguish the crash in a matter of minutes. The IC was quoted after as saying “My life got a lot better after you guys arrived.” The Airport received kudos from the other agencies on scene regarding our resources, effectiveness, efficiency, and cooperation provided.



Photo courtesy of the Everett Herald

Key points that have come up as a result of this call are:

- Call for (foam) early on known fuel spills or fuel fires.
- Have secondary agent ready in case of 3-D fires. For example: tire fire, fuel over the edge of bridge, etc. Could use DryChem or Halon.
- Have structural master streams shut down before foam application so as not to interfere with the effectiveness of the blanket.
- Use water from master streams to cool intact tank(s) and protect exposures. Remember fuel will float on water, possibly overflowing the remains of the product and causing run-off
- Have all firefighter personnel evacuate downstream of foam unit while turrets are operating. Remember the turrets can reach up to 250 feet.

This recap is written by Tony Mace. Please feel free to contact me with any questions at (425)353-1606 or e-mail at <mailto:tony.mace@co.snohomish.wa.us>



Photo courtesy of the Everett Herald