



STRUCK BYS & NEAR MISSES

This is why we are here...



STRUCK BY & NEAR MISS CASES

This booklet is dedicated to the first responders who put their lives on the line every day to keep our roads safe and clear. These are their stories.

As responders, we know the dangers of our jobs.

Sharing our stories so others can learn from them is critical to keeping each other safe.

This is why we are here.



STORMY CONDITIONS

MIKE WAGNER, TOW TRUCK OPERATOR, SANTIAM TOWING

Conditions were less than ideal—I was assisting a vehicle on the side of the road along the Santiam Pass during a snowstorm. I was off the road, standing at the rear corner of my truck, winching a car. Behind me, a pick-up came into the corner too fast, saw my lights, touched his brakes and went into a spin. My first warning was courtesy of my ears: I could hear the studded tires grinding against the ground and looked in that direction.

I dove into the snow bank on the other side of my truck while yelling at my customer to do the same. The pick-up, a Toyota 4X4, spun several times, hit the car I was winching, spun again, hit the back of my truck where I had been standing and spun one more time before crashing into the guardrail on the other side of the road. **If I wasn't paying attention I would be paralyzed, an amputee or dead.**

My advice to fellow responders—you have to always be alert. **Complacency will get you killed on the highway.** Bring all your senses to work every day and use them all. Expect all drivers to be “D” drivers and you won't be disappointed.



DUMP TRUCK DISASTER

SR TROOPER DANIEL SWIFT, OREGON STATE POLICE, PORTLAND

It was 8:30 AM. I was working a three vehicle crash on I-205 near Strawberry Lane and was stopped in the middle lane writing up the crash report while waiting for tow trucks to remove the vehicles involved.

Not 20 minutes into writing, my patrol car was hit from behind by a dump truck with a trailer. **The impact was enough to send me to the hospital with a forehead injury and a bulging disc in my neck.**

It was a clear, dry day. Rush hour traffic was crawling due to the crash blocking the middle lane and my overhead lights were on. There was no reason for him to have hit my car.



A PUSH IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION

GAVIN BOLDIZAR, CORVALLIS FIRE

I was along Highway 20, west of Philomath, responding to a motor vehicle accident in an ambulance from station four. The car was off the roadway in a ditch and into a tree. Philomath Fire was the first at the scene. Their truck was parked on a side street near the crash, so I didn't know the department was there or the access point.

After parking the ambulance down from the scene, Zach Del Nero, a member of my team, and I were walking along the shoulder of the road toward the scene where another responder was waiting.

I could hear the sound of screeching tires and brakes locking up when I felt Del Nero's hand come down hard on my shoulder and fling me off the highway. **All I saw as I was being thrown out of the way was the front bumper of a car right where I had been.**

As the careless driver sped off, my team and I could only shake off our shock and attend to the patient of the car accident. After the near-miss, Philomath Fire brought in another rig to block traffic and we loaded the patient into the ambulance.

Thanks to Del Nero's distrust of the road and quick actions, I spent the rest of my time attending to a patient instead of becoming a passenger in another ambulance or a hearse.

PROTECTING OUR OWN

DAVE ANDERSON, OREGON DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION, SALEM

We were doing a sweeping operation on the railroad overhead at White's Dairy. I was the first vehicle for oncoming traffic—a five-yard truck with an attenuator and roof-mounted arrow. We had two other vehicles with arrows and were moving traffic into the A lane. A driver in a silver car was traveling in the B lane, headed eastbound. When I realized the driver wasn't going to move over I stood on the throttle and tried to move from straddling the fog line farther to the right. The driver hit the left corner of the attenuator. At impact I was leaning completely back, head and all pressed against the seat. After impact the driver skidded past me, car on fire. I called co-workers on the radio to have them call 911 as I went to help the driver and try to put out the fire.







TIM WORKS

SR TROOPER BRIDGET KIGER, OREGON STATE POLICE, MCMINNVILLE

I had pulled over a speeding driver along Highway 99 near McMinnville. Luckily, the road and shoulder allowed me to approach the driver from the passenger side door. After getting the driver's registration, I went to write the citation by the passenger side of her vehicle. The SUV's size and tinted windows left me with very little visibility of oncoming traffic.

The only warning I had was the noise from the impact, and by the time you hear it, it's done.

I could only cringe and brace myself as a drunk driver sideswiped the SUV and sheared the mirror off the car before speeding away. I jumped in my car, the speeding driver's registration papers still in hand, and chased down the DUI driver, who at that point was trying to hide at a Texico gas station. Another officer saw me flying down the highway and pulled on-scene to take over given my role in the situation. Even with better conditions, like being able to approach from the passenger side, the highway is still an extremely dangerous place. **There is a reason we have TIM best practices: they are literally the difference between life and death.**



STATE TROOPER

SPINNING OUT OF CONTROL

CO-SUBMITTED BY:

JOE SCHIEMAN, ODOT INCIDENT RESPONSE

CHIEF TRAVIS HEWITT, HALSEY-SHEDD FIRE DEPARTMENT

Valentine's Day, 2018. It started with a six mile stretch of freezing fog touching down on I-5. Traffic was cruising down the freeway like it was a sunny day. The moment their tires hit the freeze, cars started to slide off the road and crash on both sides of the interstate. I estimate over 40 vehicles crashed. Some folks were able to drive away, others were not so lucky and sustained more serious injuries.

Halsey Fire was on-scene, using their truck to protect a crew member who was placing traffic cones at a crash that was blocking the fast lane. It was while this responder was placing cones that the fire truck was rear ended by a Ford F-350. Before we could move the vehicles, another car hit the pick-up that had struck the fire truck.

You would think the public would slow down seeing all of the vehicles sliding off the road, but they didn't.

While coming onto the scene with my lights running, I watched two other cars speed past me and spin into the shoulder.

As for the fire truck, it took 3-4 months and some \$44,000 to put it back to work. But it did its job. Using it as a barrier saved a life.



A TRUCK AND A HARD PLACE

Cory Wells, Owner of TLC Towing, Ridgefield, WA

Vancouver, WA. I was hooking up a disabled truck on the side of I-205. While I was standing between my truck and the disabled truck and checking the tow lights, a “D” driver hit the back of the disabled truck. Suddenly, I was pinned between the two trucks, unable to move until I was pulled me out some 20 minutes later. Aside from the physical injuries—broken ribs included—I now fight through symptoms of PTSD while working in traffic areas.

SPEED RACER

SGT KEVIN ELY, OREGON STATE POLICE, SALEM

I was parked on a freeway shoulder, looking for two vehicles reported to be speed racing in the area.

A van traveling northbound on the interstate drifted to the right shoulder and crashed into my vehicle around 1:30 AM. I had to jump back into my vehicle to avoid being hit.

The van didn't stop and continued northbound but, given the damage to my vehicle, I could not pursue the driver.

Troopers eventually located the van, but we never found the driver.



THE 'D' DRIVER

LT JEFFREY LEWIS, OREGON STATE POLICE, COOS BAY

Mid-afternoon Friday, May 26, 2017, I was in my fifth month as a new Station Commander with the Oregon State Police in the Coos Bay Area Command, which covers Western Douglas County from the Lane County line south through all of Coos and Curry County to the California Border. On this day I was working in the field and had arrived on the scene of a deer versus vehicle incident. The involved vehicle was parked on the northbound shoulder of Highway 101 adjacent to a guardrail with a steep drop-off near the shoulder, which left little room to park my vehicle on that side of the highway. I opted instead to park on the wider southbound shoulder.

As I arrived, I turned on all my emergency lights. After stopping, I left only my rear deck lights on to warn southbound traffic as they passed my vehicle. I crossed the road and greeted the occupants of the vehicle that had hit a deer. They pointed out the deer which I confirmed was deceased prior to gathering information to complete a crash report.





Moments later, I heard tires screeching and looked up. A small white passenger vehicle was traveling slowly as it passed my vehicle on the shoulder, followed by an aggressive gray Ford F-150 pick-up directly behind it with wheels locked, braking hard. The pick-up was about to rear end the white vehicle, then swerved around it and came skidding onto the southbound shoulder directly into my parked patrol car.

The patrol car sustained heavy rear end damage and the interior contents were strewn all over the vehicle. The entire rear window exploded and the trunk was so caved in it could only be pried open later at the tow yard. The contents inside my vehicle were thrown everywhere and my video and recording system was rendered inoperable.

As I crossed the road, the driver of the pick-up was already out of his car and saying he felt embarrassed about the crash. He mentioned the other vehicle was rubber necking. I remember thinking the white vehicle was following the law and slowing down as they passed an emergency vehicle while the pick-up was following way too close and not paying attention.

I asked if he had any injuries and he said he did not and denied needing any medical attention. I notified dispatch of the crash immediately, careful to explain I was not injured and not in the vehicle at the time it was hit.

As I surveyed the damage to my vehicle I noticed how the force of the impact had thrown the control panel for my lights and siren up off the cradle, exposing the wires and connections to the console itself. The image of the computer screen twisted out of position and shards of glass scattered throughout the vehicle from the broken rear window was haunting. I recognized that within moments of the crash I would have been returning to my vehicle and sitting down in the now glass-littered seat. I thought of my family. I remember calling them to let them know I was OK because I had already been contacted by the OSP Public Information Officer who wanted pictures to post on our Facebook page to warn people to slow down and move over. We were running a Move Over social media campaign—the timing couldn't have been better.





The whole incident is a stark reminder that these incidents happen quickly and without any warning. Had I taken those documents back to my patrol car to copy down the information instead of doing it roadside on the northbound shoulder, I would have been sitting there, myself a victim to the tremendous force that had wrecked my car. There was no warning it was about to happen, it just happened. I have thought since, don't get complacent just because it's a deer versus vehicle or single vehicle non-blocking crash. Distracted, drugged, drunk, drowsy and just plain dumb drivers will strike anytime, anywhere.

WHY WE ARE HERE

Please share your stories with us and participate in Near Miss Mondays
(beginning in October 2018)

Connect on Facebook @OregonTIMResponders
or email us at timtraining@odot.state.or.us

Be safe out there.

