

Fatality Investigation Report

Worker Struck by Vehicle

October 15, 2014

The contents of this report

This report documents the Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) investigation of a reportable incident where a tow truck operator was fatally injured when struck by a passing vehicle on the highway, while loading a disabled vehicle, in October 2014. The report begins with a short summary of what happened, and the remainder of the report covers this same information in greater detail.

Incident summary

On October 15, 2014, at approximately 8:30 a.m., a tow truck operator was in the process of loading a disabled 2011 GMC Canyon pickup truck (disabled truck) onto a 2008 Dodge Ram 5500 flatbed tow truck (tow truck). During this process, a 1999 Ford Taurus passenger car (passenger car) drove into the back of the tow truck, at highway speed, striking the tow truck operator.

The force of the collision impact pushed the tow truck forward causing the loaded disabled truck to roll off of the tow truck bed and land on the passenger car. This, in turn, caused both vehicles to ignite. Both the tow truck operator and the driver of the passenger car were pronounced deceased at the scene by Emergency Medical Services (EMS).

Background information

Employer: All Peace Towing and Hotshot Ltd.

On April 9, 2010, All Peace Towing and Hotshot Ltd. was established as the operating name of the employer with the business under the legal name of “All Peace Transport Ltd”. This business is located in Peace River, Alberta and provides service to the surrounding region. The employer had 24 individuals employed at the time of the incident.

Worker (Deceased): Tow Truck Operator

The tow truck operator had been employed with All Peace Towing and Hot Shot Ltd. since July 23, 2014, approximately 3 months prior to the incident. Overall the tow truck operator had approximately 25 years of experience in the towing industry.

Equipment and materials

2008 Dodge Ram 5500 flatbed tow truck (tow truck)

Vehicle Identification Number *****



Figure 1 depicts the tow truck.

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2011 GMC Canyon pickup truck (disabled truck)
Vehicle Identification Number *****



Figure 2 depicts the disabled truck's position (facing east on Range Road 830 – resting on the passenger car hood) after rolling off the back of the tow truck when struck by the passenger car. Photograph provided by Peace River Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP).

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1999 Ford Taurus passenger car (passenger car)
Vehicle Identification Number *****



Figure 3 depicts the passenger car that struck the back of the tow truck and tow truck operator. Photograph provided by Peace River RCMP.

Aerial Image of Collision Scene



Figure 4 was taken on October 15, 2014, by RCMP collision reconstruction analysis officer at the scene. The picture is an aerial photograph which depicts the positions of the three vehicles post-incident. Photograph provided by Peace River RCMP.

- A. Green passenger car*
- B. White tow truck*
- C. Blue disabled truck*
- D. The distance of 44.98 metres (m) between A and B after impact.*

Sequence of events

On October 15, 2015, at approximately 07:30 a.m., All Peace Transport Ltd. held a “Safety/Staff Meeting”. The sign-in sheet recorded the names of 15 attendees including the tow truck operator. During the meeting, a number of scheduling, logistics and safety issues were addressed including PPE (coverall policy, and clean shaven policy).

At approximately 07:30 a.m., the driver of a 2011 GMC Canyon truck (disabled truck) broke down on Township Road 830, approximately 4 kilometres (km) east of Highway 2 near the town of Peace River, Alberta. The driver of the disabled truck pulled the vehicle off the road, activated the four- way flashing lights, donned a safety vest, placed traffic cones outside the vehicle, and called Alberta Motor Association (AMA) for a tow truck.

At approximately 8:05 a.m., a tow truck from All Peace Towing and Hotshot Ltd. arrived at the location of the disabled truck. The tow truck operator parked on Township Road 830 facing east, put the vehicle in park, and engaged the four way flashers and the emergency tow light bar on the tow truck. The tow truck operator was wearing high-visibility coveralls. This was confirmed by evidence gathered at the scene by the Peace River RCMP including a witness statement from the driver of the disabled truck.

The tow truck operator asked the disabled truck driver to reposition the disabled truck onto the road so it could be loaded onto the tow truck. The driver of the disabled truck moved the traffic cones and drove the disabled truck onto the highway with the four-way flashers still engaged.

The tow truck operator directed the disabled truck driver to go sit in the cab of the tow truck to stay warm. As the disabled truck driver was getting into the tow truck, the disabled truck driver saw the tow truck operator attach the winch hook onto the disabled truck and begin to pull it onto the flatbed of the tow truck. From inside the tow truck, the disabled truck driver was able to see the tow truck operator finish loading the disabled truck, remove chains from an outside panel box on the passenger side of the tow truck, and walk to the back of the tow truck.

While sitting in the passenger seat of the tow truck, the disabled truck driver noted that there was a sudden loud bang and the tow truck jerked forward and began rolling forward down Range Road 830. The disabled truck driver moved the disabled truck driver’s left leg over to the driver’s side and depressed the brake pedal to stop the tow truck.

The driver of the disabled truck got out of the tow truck and could not locate the tow truck operator. The disabled truck driver observed the disabled truck was no longer on the back of the tow truck but was located on Range Road 830 in the area where it had been previously loaded. There was smoke billowing from the rear of the disabled truck.

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At 8:30 a.m., another motorist arrived on the scene and called “911”. At that time, all parties at the scene observed there was a passenger car underneath the back of the disabled truck and both the disabled truck and passenger car were on fire. The driver of the disabled truck looked for a fire extinguisher in the outside panel boxes of the tow truck but was unable to locate one.

Peace River RCMP and emergency response services (fire and medical) arrived on-scene at approximately 9:25 a.m. and extinguished the fire. The tow truck operator was located underneath the rear driver side wheel of the disabled truck in a facedown position. The operator of the passenger car was located in the driver’s seat with the driver’s seatbelt in place.

Both the tow truck operator and the driver of the passenger car were pronounced deceased at the scene by Peace River RCMP and EMS who responded.

A mechanic, who was hired by the Peace River RCMP, checked the tow truck for mechanical deficiencies and verified the tow truck was in good operating condition. The gear shift indicated that the tow truck was in park at the time of the incident. This was all verified through evidence provided by the Peace River RCMP.

The RCMP collision reconstruction analysis concluded “The calculated minimum impact speed was 71 km per hour (kph); the actual impact speed was most likely much higher. Driver inattention (passenger car) was a contributing factor. Vehicle speed, road conditions and environmental conditions were not contributing factors”.

A review for enforcement action (REA) was completed on August 30, 2016, by OHS. As a result of the review, this file was not recommended for enforcement action.

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Signatures

ORIGINAL REPORT SIGNED

October 24, 2016

Lead Investigator

Date

ORIGINAL REPORT SIGNED

October 24, 2016

Manager

Date

ORIGINAL REPORT SIGNED

November 7, 2016

Director

Date