

New South Wales Fire Brigades Operations Bulletin 2010/01 Reducing the impact of heavy vehicle fires



Issue

Heavy vehicle fires on motorways, freeways and busy roads cause major disruptions to traffic as lanes or whole roads have to be closed until the vehicle is removed. This has significant costs for the community in terms of lost time, missed connections and appointments, delayed deliveries, etc. It is estimated that travel delays caused by vehicle crashes cost Australians \$1.6 billion in 2003¹.

If the heavy vehicle's wheels and running gear are destroyed by the fire, the vehicle and its load become immobile and cranes and other large machinery are needed to clear the site. This can take many hours.



Figure 1 - Heavy machinery was needed to remove this vehicle

If firefighters can safely protect the wheels and running gear, the vehicle can be towed away, significantly reducing the length of time the road has to be closed.



Figure 2 - Firefighters used foam to protect the wheels and running gear, making this an easy tow away

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Setting objectives

A heavy vehicle fire on a motorway, freeway or other busy road is likely to cause significant disruption to traffic. The cost of traffic disruption may be much higher than the cost of losing the load.

In these circumstances, protecting the wheels and running gear so that the vehicle can be towed away may be a more important objective than protecting the vehicle's load.

Incident Action Plan

The Incident Action Plan for a heavy vehicle fire will depend on:

- achieving safe working conditions for firefighters ([SOG 13.2](#) and [SB 2001/15](#))
- whether lives are at risk
- the nature and extent of the fire
- the nature of the load
- the road conditions.

When developing the Incident Action Plan consider:

- making the protection of the wheels and running gear a priority
- if resources are available, allocating one crew member to protecting the wheels and running gear, and another to fighting the fire
- calling early for additional water supplies and crews.

Tactics for protecting the wheels and running gear

Use the first line of hose to quickly apply a thick Class A or B foam blanket over the wheels and running gear to protect them from fire and heat damage.

Maintain the foam blanket throughout the fire.

Use a second line of hose to fight the fire.

If Class B foam is used, contain the runoff ([In Orders 2009/9](#)).

To conserve water, consider using branches set to a low flow rate.

Noted, Station Commander	A	B	C	D	Other
Contact Officers			File Number		Date
SO Bruce Covey or QF Robbie Stephenson, 75 Berowra A, (02) 9456 3536			CHO/06238		11 January 2010

Previous Operations Bulletin: 2009/07 - NSWFB and RFS joint operations radio channels

¹ Computed from Tables 1 and 3, Connelly, Luke B, and Supangan, Richard, 'The economic costs of road traffic crashes: Australia, states and territories', *Accident Analysis and Prevention*, No 38, 2006, pp 1087-1093.