



NEWS



News Headlines 01/09/2020

- What's it like to steer the back end of a long fire truck? These guys know
- Firefighters knock out Lucerne Valley blaze that brought down power lines
- Firefighters Knockdown Vacant Mobile Home Fire in Lucerne Valley
- Driver suffers major injuries as semi truck overturns in Fontana on Jan. 8
- Pepsi truck topples off 15 Freeway in Fontana spilling cans of soda across roadway
- Pepsi truck crashes off I-15 overpass in Fontana, driver airlifted
- Driver Rescued After Pepsi Truck Goes Over Side of 15 Freeway in Fontana
- Driver Extricated From Overturned Pepsi Big Rig On 15 Freeway In Fontana

What's it like to steer the back end of a long fire truck? These guys know

Emily Rasmussen, Long Beach Press-Telegram / Daily Bulletin

Posted: January 9, 2020, 6:20 am



Firefighter Tony Mascorro, who operates the rear tiller truck at San Bernardino County Fire Station 71 in Fontana on Tuesday, Dec. 3, 2019. (Photo by Watchara Phomicinda, The Press-Enterprise/SCNG)

On a gloomy morning in downtown Los Angeles, the crew at Los Angeles Fire Station 10 meandered about the firehouse, checked the equipment and swapped playful jabs at one another.

Then the bell rang out.

The loudspeaker blared out orders for a rescue: Someone was on top of a two-story building, possibly threatening to jump.

Firefighter Steve Schaller, 39, rushed into his yellow jumpsuit. He hopped into the front driver's seat of Tiller Fire Truck 10. His captain jumped in next to him. A third firefighter joined them in the cab.

Sixty feet in the back, firefighter Robert Bobadilla climbed up the side of the truck and into a glass and metal cab the size of a small fridge, alone. He pulled his headset on as the engine in front roared to life.

As the truck took off, Bobadilla, 32, was tugged along, steering in conjunction with the firefighter up front driving, the engineer – his partner.

Bobadilla is a tillerman, one of the men and women you see sitting in the back of such elongated fire trucks – from L.A. and Torrance to Orange and San Bernardino counties and elsewhere.

He is much more than a public icon for excited children to wave to – tiller drivers play a unique role in steering what many in the field call a “rolling toolbox,” a fire truck stuff with tools that can still maneuver into more challenging spaces than an average fire truck.

“He drives it like a tractor trailer,” Bobadilla said of his teammate up front, Schaller, “so I really don't have to tiller unless we're in a tight spot or narrow street – I'm trying to avoid an object.”

The front and back of the tiller truck are one but separate, on independent axles. The tillerman's steering wheel controls the rear tires.

Steering the rear is opposite from driving a typical vehicle: If the front engineer makes a right turn, the tillerman swings his steering wheel to the left.

“Some of the challenges of operating the back is you always have to stay vigilant,” said Jeff Lewison, a 29-year-old tillerman with the Torrance Fire Department. “You can't zone out.”

Everything else – acceleration, brakes, turn signals, sirens and more – is controlled by the engineer up front.

Capt. Bobby Roset of the **San Bernardino County Fire** Department said he was “scared to death” when first sat in the tiller box nearly 20 years ago.

“It’s intimidating the first time you ever tiller, because you don’t have a brake pedal and you don’t have a gas pedal,” the 48-year-old said. “You are getting pulled around town. It’s not like driving a car, where you have control.”

The engineer and tillerman constantly talk through radio headsets. In case those headsets fail for some reason, there is a small horn in the tiller box – the tillerman can beep signals to the engineer, signaling whether to go, or to stop or to back up.

The pecking order on the tiller truck goes like this: firefighter, tillerman, engineer, captain.

To be a tillerman takes dozens of hours of specialized practice – and trust must be gained with the team on the truck.

“There have been accidents,” said Robert Frick, an engineer who drives the front of tiller trucks for the Orange County Fire Authority. “Documented accidents where the engineer in the front may have been driving a little too fast and not allowing the tillerman to compensate to turn around a tight turn,” the 52-year-old Frick said about tiller trucks in general. “That’s why it’s always slow, methodical, defensive and maintaining communication.”

Roset has held every one of the four positions on the tiller truck. These days, he works out of Fontana Station 71, as the captain riding up front on calls. But he also lends a hand training green tillermen.

“Being on the truck makes you think outside of the box, because calls aren’t textbook,” Roset said. “You take all of the knowledge from over the years and apply it to make it work.”

For example, if there’s a bad accident on the freeway, the tiller truck can block off traffic.

Roset has gently jackknifed the truck on purpose and straightened it out to park sideways, turning it into a barricade on the 215 Freeway when responding to difficult calls, such as for crashes so bad that firefighters might need to deploy the Jaws of Life.

“I look at this as 68 feet of bulletproof cones,” Roset said. “I’ll put that between us and people – if someone’s going to hit (something), they’re going to hit this – which is replaceable, versus taking us all out on the other side.”

Tools on the truck include chainsaws, ventilation fans and ladders of varying sizes.

“Honestly, I think it’s my love for kind of fixing things,” Schaller said of why he became a firefighter. “Once I found out that literally people call 911 for any problem – no matter how small or big – that is really what we do day in and day out.”

There is a gigantic cushion, too, tucked away – which is why the Los Angeles Fire Department’s tiller truck trundled recently to that call for the person who firefighters thought might jump from the building (First responders were able to get the person down without the cushion).

And then there's the centerpiece, the 100-foot-or-so ladder that can reach the rooftops of buildings up to seven or eight stories high.

While in movies rescues from windows are a common use of the ladder, more often it's deployed by firefighters to get onto rooftops and cut holes with chainsaws for ventilation during fires.

There's also a hose nozzle strapped to the top of the ladder to douse fires with water from up above.

From way up above.

"It is still nerve-racking – I wasn't the biggest fan of heights at first, I'm not going to lie," said Trevor Lima, 31, a tillerman for the Orange County Fire Authority, which covers much of the county. "It takes time trusting your equipment."

Like an athlete, those good in the tiller box need poise.

"The biggest mistake you can make as a tillerman is overthinking and oversteering," Lima said. "If you try to help (the front driver) too much, you'll end up swerving into another lane."

Before they hit the streets, there are hours of driving in empty parking lots and snaking between cones. There are serpentine courses set up, and other courses the engineer and tiller must navigate going backward.

"I thought I hit nothing," Roset recalled of a practice session. "Because you're back there and, look, I thought I had cleared them all. But 10 (of 100) cones ended up being down."

Better than side-swiping cars later.

"We're never going to take a guy out on the busy roads until we're comfortable, and he's comfortable," said John Wass, an engineer with the Torrance Fire Department.

Even when a rookie tillerman becomes a calm vet, it can get hot back there in the tiller box. Unlike up front, there's no air conditioning.

"You have two fans, but they don't circulate air very well," said Jaime Torres, a tillerman for the Orange County Fire Authority who is learning to become an engineer. "The guys in the nice, brand new cab, they have AC and it's nice and chilly."

"When I'm in there and (Lima's) in the back, I'll be like, 'Oh, it's cold in here – I need to put my jacket on.' When it's 90 or 100 degrees outside, he's sweating back there."

<https://www.dailybulletin.com/2020/01/09/whats-it-like-to-steer-the-back-end-of-a-long-fire-truck-these-guys-know/>

Firefighters knock out Lucerne Valley blaze that brought down power lines

Martin Estacio, Victorville Daily Press

Posted: January 8, 2020, 1:55 pm



San Bernardino County Fire Department crews work to extinguish a blaze in Lucerne Valley on Tuesday, Jan. 7, 2020. [PHOTO COURTESY OF COUNTY FIRE]

LUCERNE VALLEY — A fire that ripped through a vacant mobile home here Tuesday evening also brought down power lines before it was extinguished by firefighters.

The fire broke out at 6:22 p.m. when **San Bernardino County Fire** Department crews were sent to an address in the 62900 block of Rabbit Springs Road.

Firefighters arrived in fewer than five minutes to find the mobile home engulfed in flames, according to a County Fire news release.

Crews also found fire threatening “nearby vegetation, trailers (and) power lines (were) down as a result of the fire,” the statement read.

Firefighters fought the blaze from the exterior, knocking it down in about 20 minutes. Southern California Edison personnel also responded to deal with the electrical hazard.

Estimates of damage weren’t available, but fire officials said the trailer sustained major damage.

<https://www.vvdailypress.com/news/20200108/firefighters-knock-out-lucerne-valley-blaze-that-brought-down-power-lines>

Firefighters Knockdown Vacant Mobile Home Fire in Lucerne Valley

Hugo Valdez, Victor Valley News Group

Posted: January 8, 2020



(Photo courtesy of San Bernardino County Fire)

LUCERNE VALLEY, Calif. — **San Bernardino County Firefighters** responded to a fire in Lucerne Valley involving a vacant mobile home Tuesday evening.

At 6:22 pm County Fire crews were dispatched to a reported structure fire in the 62900 block of Rabbit Springs Road in Lucerne Valley.

Firefighters arrived in 4 minutes to find a vacant mobile home well involved with exposures to nearby vegetation, trailers & power lines down as a result of the fire, officials said.

According to a news release, “crews initiated a defensive fire attack, fighting the fire from the exterior, knocking down the fire in approximately 20 minutes.”

The Fire is under investigation by San Bernardino County Fire Investigators. No damage estimates were available at the time of the release, however the vacant trailer received major damage.

County Fire responded with (3) Medic Engines, (1) Medic Truck, (1) Water Tender, (1) Battalion Chief & (1) Fire Investigator. Apple Valley Fire Department assisted with (1) Medic Engine.

Stormy weather can cause power lines to fall. This can create hazards – electrifying puddles, wet grass, and the surrounding area. Don’t touch anyone or anything in contact with a downed power line. Always assume downed power lines are energized and dangerous. Stay away and call 911.

Always be aware when you’re around overhead power lines. Stay at least 10 feet away from both overhead power lines and electrical facilities, and never approach or touch overhead power lines or any person or object in contact with the lines.

If you think your tree is a safety hazard to SCE infrastructure; specifically power lines, please call SCE at 1-800-655-4555 to schedule a tree inspection.

<https://www.vvng.com/firefighters-knockdown-vacant-mobile-home-fire-in-lucerne-valley/>

Driver suffers major injuries as semi truck overturns in Fontana on Jan. 8

Mike Myers, Fontana Herald News

Posted: January 8, 2020



An injured person is taken by firefighters to a hospital. (Contributed photos by Mike Myers)

San Bernardino County firefighters worked to extricate the driver of a big rig that overturned on the northbound Interstate 15 Freeway and went over the side at the Cherry Avenue overpass in Fontana on Jan. 8.

San Bernardino County Fire Captain Kyle Hauducoeur said that at about 11 a.m., the first engine on scene found that a semi truck full of soda products had overturned for unknown reasons, off the northbound 15 Freeway about midway across the Cherry Avenue overcrossing.

The driver and lone occupant of the truck, a man from Las Vegas, was pinned in the driver's seat, Hauducoeur said.

He said it took about 45 minutes to extricate the driver. "Pieces of the cab had to be peeled away from the victim" during the extrication, he said.

According to Hauducoeur, witnesses who were driving northbound on Cherry, below the freeway, stopped and rendered aid to the driver before the Fire Department arrived.

Heavy duty tow trucks were used to prevent the big rig from rolling over.

The eastbound Route 210 Freeway was closed to the northbound 15 so a San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department helicopter could land on the freeway. The northbound 15 Freeway was closed at the 210 during the rescue.

The victim was flown to Loma Linda University Medical Center with major injuries.

The California Highway Patrol is handling the investigation.

https://www.fontanaheraldnews.com/news/driver-suffers-major-injuries-as-semi-truck-overturms-in-fontana/article_90213dd6-3253-11ea-b004-5b6fc93a6174.html

Pepsi truck topples off 15 Freeway in Fontana spilling cans of soda across roadway

Richard K. De Atley, The Press Enterprise/Daily Bulletin

Posted: January 8, 2020, 3:05 pm



The driver of a Pepsi truck which crashed off of the 15 freeway in Fontana Wednesday Jan. 8, 2020 had to be cut out of his boot during extrication from the wreck by **San Bernardino County firefighters**. The crash happened at approximately 10:57 a.m. on the northbound 15 freeway in the northbound transition lane from the 210 freeway. The 15 freeway was shutdown for a short period to land a helicopter on the freeway to transport the driver who sustained unknown injuries. (Photo by Will Lester, Inland Valley Daily Bulletin/SCNG)

A semi-truck hauling Pepsi products went off the northbound 15 Freeway in Fontana Wednesday, Jan. 8, overturning and spilling thousands of cans of soda as it came to rest on the landscaping below the roadway, with the driver freed from the wreckage and taken by helicopter to a hospital.

The late-morning crash tied up both the 15 Freeway and westbound lanes of the 210 Freeway, which intersects with the 15 Freeway where the crash occurred, just west of Cherry Avenue.

The driver, identified as a 48-year-old Nevada man, suffered a broken left leg and other injuries California Highway Patrol Officer Jesus Garcia said. The driver was airlifted to Loma Linda University Medical Center.

The CHP log for the incident said he was freed from the wreckage about half an hour after the 10:57 a.m. crash. The truck was coming from Moreno Valley, Garcia said.

No other vehicles were involved, and no other injuries were reported, Garcia said. "We were lucky," he added.

A witness told the CHP that the semi and its load were heading northbound on the 15 Freeway when it suddenly made a hard right turn and hit the retainer wall in the area of the Cherry Avenue undercrossing, Garcia said.

"It rode it for the whole span," then left the freeway and landed upside down, Garcia said.

Freeway closures and a SigAlert was called for the area to make way for the helicopter ambulance, use of a heavy-duty crane to remove the tractor-trailer, and scooping up the cans of various Pepsi products at the site.

The roadways were cleared shortly before 4 p.m.

<https://www.dailybulletin.com/2020/01/08/pepsi-truck-topples-off-15-freeway-in-fontana-spilling-cans-of-soda-across-roadway/>

Pepsi truck crashes off I-15 overpass in Fontana, driver airlifted

Hugo Valdez, Victor Valley News Group

Posted: January 8, 2020



(photo by Erika Booth)

FONTANA, Calif. (VVNG.com) — A Pepsi truck crashed and fell over the side of the I-15 in Fontana prompting a temporary closure of the freeway on Wednesday.

According to the California Highway Patrol incident logs, the crash happened at about 11:30 am at Cherry Avenue and the I-15 overpass, near Sierra Avenue.

The incident prompted officials to shutdown the northbound lanes of the freeway as a helicopter landed on the freeway to airlift the driver of the semi. The freeway has since reopened.

San Bernardino County Firefighters performed an extensive extrication on the driver who was pinned inside the mangled cab. The male driver was eventually removed from the wreckage and airlifted to a trauma center. An updated on his injuries was not available.

Officials said the westbound 210 freeway to the northbound 15 is expected to remain closed during the investigation.

It was not immediately known what caused the Pepsi truck to overturn. The California Highway Patrol is investigating the cause of the crash. Additional information will be updated as it becomes available.

<https://www.vvng.com/pepsi-truck-crashes-off-i-15-overpass-in-fontana-driver-airlifted/>

Driver Rescued After Pepsi Truck Goes Over Side of 15 Freeway in Fontana

Tracy Bloom, KTLA 5 News

Posted: January 8, 2020, 12:45 pm

A Pepsi truck fell over the side of the 15 Freeway in Fontana and overturned, resulting in a rescue effort that led to the closure of all northbound lanes early Wednesday afternoon.

The incident was reported just before 11 a.m. on the northbound 15 at Cherry Avenue, just north of the 210 Freeway, according to the California Highway Patrol's incident log.

The driver became trapped inside the semi-truck, prompting a response from the **San Bernardino County Fire Department**.

By 12:30 p.m., the individual was freed from the wreckage, according to the log.

CHP described the crash as an "injury accident," but did not provide information on the driver's condition. The patient was transported to a hospital, according to the log.

All northbound lanes of the 15 Freeway were temporarily closed as an airship landed on the road amid the rescue effort. They have since been reopened.

The westbound 210 connector to the northbound 15 was also shut down as crews worked to recover the overturned truck.

Cherry Avenue was also expected to experience intermittent closures as CHP investigates the crash, according to the Fontana Police Department.

It was not immediately known what caused the Pepsi truck to overturn.

No additional information has been released.

<https://ktla.com/2020/01/08/driver-rescued-after-pepsi-truck-goes-over-side-of-15-freeway-in-fontana/>

Driver Extricated From Overturned Pepsi Big Rig On 15 Freeway In Fontana

Staff Writer, CBS 2 / KCAL 9 News

Posted: January 8, 2020, 1:41 pm

FONTANA (CBSLA) — A driver was hospitalized Wednesday after his Pepsi semi-truck overturned on the 15 Freeway, trapping him inside.

The truck overturned just before 11 a.m. on the northbound side of the freeway near the 210 interchange.

It took **San Bernardino County Fire** 45 minutes to extricate the driver. He was then airlifted to a hospital.

All lanes of the northbound side of the 15 Freeway were closed while crews worked but have since reopened.

No one else was said to have been injured in the accident.

<https://losangeles.cbslocal.com/2020/01/08/driver-extricated-overturned-big-rig-15-freeway-fontana/>