



Montana Trooper

# On the Road

On November 6, 2012, the white Ford pickup (foreground) was travelling eastbound on US Highway 2 east of Saco and was slowing to make a left hand turn. A Peterbilt semi-truck pulling a livestock trailer loaded with calves was also eastbound, behind the Ford. A black Nissan pickup (background) was traveling westbound and was near enough to the intersection that the white Ford waited to make its turn. The semi failed to slow down as it came up behind and struck the rear of the Ford pickup, causing the Ford to spin into the eastbound traffic lane, where it was struck by the Nissan traveling at highway speed. The cab and bed of the Ford were almost entirely separated from its frame, and



it came to rest against the power pole. Everyone was wearing their seatbelts. The driver of the semi was not injured. The drivers of the two pickups were transported to area hospitals, treated, and released the same afternoon. This crash was investigated by Trooper Daniel E. Ohl.

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This little girl was in the front seat of a car that Trooper Shad Andersen stopped for following too closely at approximately 65 mph. She was unrestrained on the front seat. The driver was her mother, and she was intoxicated to the point that she could barely hold her head up as Trooper Andersen



spoke with her. One of the officers that assisted Trooper Andersen on this stop motioned to the girl in this picture and said, "This little girl is tougher than all of us." She's going to have to be.

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On November 13, 2012, this semi-truck loaded with office furniture was westbound on US Highway 2 near Saco. The driver was intentionally driving on the edge of the pavement until his passenger side tires went off the road. The vehicle traveled into the north ditch, and the driver over-corrected, bringing the semi back onto the highway where it traveled sideways until it tipped onto its side. When the Florida driver was asked why he was driving on the edge of the pavement he replied, "I don't know what to do with this snow and ice. Where was I supposed to drive? If it were mud or sand, I'd show you how to drive!" The highway was closed for several hours as a crew unloaded the entire trailer and reloaded it into a different trailer by hand prior to towing it.

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## Montana Trooper

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This crash was investigated by Trooper Daniel E. Ohl.



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This was the scene on Vaughn South Frontage Road, milepost 5.5, 2.5 miles west of Great Falls, on April 2, 2013, at 1445 hours. The trailer's axle assembly was torn out from under the trailer as it traveled westbound when the east bound 2003 Ford Taurus crossed the centerline and struck it at highway speed. The driver of the Taurus was killed in the collision. Neither alcohol nor speed was a factor in the collision. The driver of the Ford Taurus, who was 86 years old, appeared to have fallen asleep while driving and crossed the centerline. The

driver of the semi was not injured in the collision. The crash was investigated by Trooper Dana Cockrell (MHP 332).



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In June of 2012, the male driver of this half ton pickup set out to tow a borrowed tandem axle trailer, loaded down with a disabled SUV that weighed more than the towing pickup. The driver made it four miles from where he had hooked up when the weight of the trailer caused the combination to fishtail, jackknife, run off the opposite side of the roadway, striking a fence and a large tree. The SUV broke the restraints and rolled off the trailer. Lessons learned by this driver were that his towing vehicle should have

been at least a three quarter ton and that there is a reason for the law requiring trailer brakes. This crash was investigated by Trooper Rocky Bailey (MHP 261), in Ravalli County.



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This February 25, 2013, photo is of the front of a pickup involved in a two vehicle head-on collision which occurred at 0317 hours on US Highway 87/89 at milepost 71.3. This location is on the Belt Creek Bridge approximately 1500 ft. west of the Armington Junction Scalehouse/Rest Area. The 1998 Toyota Tacoma pickup was westbound when it side-swiped the guardrail, crossed the cen-

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## Montana Trooper

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terline, and collided head-on with a 2003 Honda Accord. The driver of the Honda Accord was traveling to Billings to start his work week and was killed in the crash. Both male occupants of the Toyota Tacoma were fully ejected and died at the scene. They were both intoxicated and obviously unbelted.

Of special note, the security camera from the rest area picked up the sound of the pickup approaching the junction, stopping at the stop sign, and then turning westbound and accelerating on US Highway 87/89. Two distinct collisions are then heard on the recording. The first is the collision with the guardrail, and the second is the collision with the eastbound vehicle. The recording allowed a determination of the time of the accident.

This crash was investigated by Trooper Donald Lee (MHP 355).



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Near Billings, this vehicle swerved to avoid another vehicle that attempted an unsafe lane change. The driver lost

control and yawed backwards into the cable barrier system, which did keep it from crossing into the other lane, although the cables crushed the roof. This crash was investigated by Trooper Darvin Mees (MHP 304).



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On November 15, 2012, Trooper Dan Ohl investigated this crash, in which a semi-tractor hauling 800 pound bombs crossing the centerline in the fog and hit another truck headlight-to-headlight on U.S. Highway 2, just east of Saco. The highway was temporarily closed while an E.O.D. team flew in from Malmstrom Air Force Base in approximately



-10 degree weather with the ever-present eastern Montana wind. It goes to show, you never know what's inside those big trucks.



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On the night of January 18, 2013, the male driver of this truck led the Phillips County Sheriff's Office on a pursuit on a gravel road near Saco. He was successful at eluding the deputy, but then he took a curve too fast and struck a bridge. The pickup went off the edge of the bridge and rolled upside down as it went off. The only thing keeping the front of the pickup from plunging down into the creek was one of the front tow hooks that had gotten caught on part of the bridge rail during the crash. Since the deputy was no longer in pursuit and there was no traffic, the driver had to jump down from his upside-down truck, walk several miles back to town, and report that he'd wrecked his truck. This

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## Montana Trooper

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crash was investigated by Trooper Daniel E. Ohl.



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This white passenger car was heading east and a black Suburban was heading west on Highway 35. The driver of the car abruptly turned left in front of the Suburban in an attempt to turn onto Columbia Falls Stage Road. The driver of the Suburban tried to avoid the crash by braking, but there was not enough time, and he struck the right side of the car with the front right corner of the Suburban. The Suburban continued on and slid off the north side of the road and rolled, coming to rest on its wheels facing northeast. Both drivers were transported to the hospital via ambulances,



and they only sustained minor injuries, even though neither driver was wearing a seat belt. This crash was investigated by Trooper Jerril M. Ren.

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On the afternoon of January 11, 2013, a truck driver attempted to make a U-turn on a narrow portion of US Highway 2 between Chinook and Harlem and became stuck, blocking both lanes of traffic for several hours before being towed out.



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In October of 2012, the driver of this half ton pickup made it less than four miles down the East Side Highway on his anticipated three state trip to transport an inherited tractor. The weight of the tractor was estimated between five and six thousand pounds. However, the wheel base was too wide to fit between the wheel wells of the trailer, so they secured the bulk of the weight behind the wheel wells. The chains used to tie the tractor down were for half ton weight loads, and when the pickup got up to about 50 MPH, the driver attempted to brake at the crest of a small hill without benefit of trailer brakes. The combination jackknifed, and the weight of

the trailer load pushed both vehicles off the right side of the roadway, where the pickup rolled over and separated from the trailer. The three quarter inch steel tow hitch was twisted a quarter of the way around. This crash was investigated by Trooper Jeremiah Snider (MHP 279), with assistance by Trooper Rocky Bailey (MHP261).



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The driver of this truck was southbound on Highway 89 North near Monarch. He began was watching an animal that was several yards off the road, thinking the animal was going to cross a bridge that crosses Belt Creek and then run onto the roadway. In watching the animal, however, the driver failed to keep track of the road and drove into the water filled ditch. This crash was investigated by Trooper Mark Tome (MHP 345).



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