

CHARLESTON

FIRE DEPARTMENT



Fuel Tanker Accident Closes Ravenel Bridge

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Charleston, SC (May 27, 2015): On 05/26/2015 at 10:43 AM, Charleston and Mount Pleasant Fire Departments, Charleston and Mount Pleasant Police Departments, and Charleston County EMS, were dispatched for a motor vehicle accident involving a possible fuel tanker on northbound US-17 on the Arthur Ravenel Jr. Bridge. First arriving emergency responders determined a sedan type vehicle had collided with a diesel fuel tractor trailer carrying approximately 7,800 gallons of diesel fuel. Charleston County EMS personnel arrived on the scene and performed a rapid extrication of the driver of the sedan and confirmed the tanker may be leaking fuel.

First arriving fire personnel determined the tanker was leaking diesel fuel and requested the Charleston Police Department shut down the northbound lanes of the bridge to traffic. Fire personnel quickly applied oil dry to the leaking diesel to limit the spread on the bridge and into the water. Personnel further determined the undercarriage valves of the tanker were damaged causing the fuel to leak from multiple points. Fire command on scene requested additional resources including hazardous materials team members from the Charleston and Mount Pleasant Fire Departments. Marine units with the Charleston Fire Department and the US Coast Guard Sector Charleston were requested to determine if the leak had extended into the waterway below.

Hazardous materials team members were unable to stop the leak with emergency shutoff valves located on the trailer. For safety of personnel on scene and to safely mitigate the hazard, on-scene commanders made the decision to close the southbound lanes of the bridge at approximately 12:40 PM after a collision occurred on the southbound span adjacent to the incident. Haz mat personnel continually rotated capturing leaking fuel and transferred it to drums while awaiting the arrival of offloading equipment from Georgetown. Fire suppression crews were in place and rotated frequently due to heat and to provide protection in case the fuel ignited. Haz mat members collected approximately 300 gallons of fuel that leaked from the damaged tanker. An unknown amount of fuel entered the waterway through the bridge's drainage system.

The offloading tanker arrived and preparations were made for a transfer of the fuel. Fire personnel monitored the transfer operation that took approximately two hours to complete. After the fuel was successfully transferred without incident, personnel coordinated with towing services to separate the vehicles and remove them from the scene. A private company completed the cleanup of product on the roadway before the bridge was reopened.

One firefighter was transported to a local hospital for dehydration during the incident. The Ravenel Bridge was completely reopened at approximately 7:55 PM. The Charleston Fire Department would like to thank the public for their patience while personnel mitigated the incident.

Partner agencies responding to the incident included: Charleston and Mount Pleasant Fire and Police Departments, Charleston County EMS and Rescue Squad, US Coast Guard Sector Charleston and the SC Department of Environmental Health and Control.

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