

Workers Free Trucker From Overturned Chemical Tanker

BY TERRY POPE

Area rescue workers used three "jaws of life" hydraulic cutting tools Saturday morning to free a Riegelwood man from his overturned chemical tanker truck near Belville.

According to State Highway Patrol reports, George E. Keaton, 37, was traveling south on the U.S. 74-76 off-ramp to U.S. 17 when his load of DMT, or dimethyl terephthalate, shifted and caused the 1982 Mack truck to overturn about two miles west of Belville.

Registered to Central Transport Co. of High Point, the truck skidded down an embankment on the left side of the ramp, knocking down two road markers and several shrubs, State Trooper D.A. Lewis reported.

Lewis said the driver failed to reduce speed for a curve, causing the load to shift. Although Lewis indicated the driver was exceeding a safe speed, charges are still pending, a Highway Patrol spokeswoman reported Tuesday afternoon.

Keaton, who was seriously injured, was taken to New Hanover Memorial Hospital in Wilmington. He was freed from the truck nearly two hours after the 10 a.m. accident occurred.

Rescue personnel from Town Creek, Leland and Acme-Delco-Rieglewood along with fire units from both Leland and Wilmington Fire and Rescue aided in the rescue effort, said Cecil Logan, Brunswick County Emergency Management Coordinator. "Jaws of life" tools were transported from Town Creek, Acme-Delco and Wilmington rescue units.

At the time of the accident, Keaton was hauling between 40,000 and 47,000 pounds of DMT at a temperature of around 320 degrees in the tanker, Logan said. At that temperature, the chemical is in a liquid state and crystallizes once it becomes 140 degrees or cooler, he added.

"Less than five gallons leaked out," Logan said. "About 20 gallons of diesel fuel also leaked out. Both tanks were leaking."

Logan said it was good luck that the tank did not rupture. The truck

cab was destroyed and the tanker was also damaged, creating about \$70,000 in damage, Lewis estimated.

"If anybody had gotten in contact with it before it crystallized, they would have gotten burned," Logan said. Aside from its temperature, the chemical used to make Dacron polyester fibers is not dangerous, he added.

Keaton had just picked up the chemical at the Dupont Cape Fear site in Leland, about five miles from the accident, and was transporting it to a Dupont plant in South Carolina. After sliding down the 34-foot embankment, the driver turned off his engine and lights and waited for about 45 minutes before help arrived, Logan said.

After learning of the accident, Jay Eller, safety director of the Central Transport Company's substation in Wilmington, helped coordinate the uprighting and removal of the tanker. Rescue workers were also joined by members of the Dupont hazardous material team in the clean-up effort.

"They had to cut the seats out of the cab," Logan said. "He was pinned in upside down."

Logan said it took five wreckers and one crane to right the tanker, which was hauled away by another tractor trailer rig.

Keaton was later released from the hospital with a fractured collar bone and fractured knee, Logan said.



STAFF PHOTO BY BILL MCGOWAN

'Gold Rush' Coupon Problems Remain

BY SUSAN USHER

It's been more than a month since the Fayetteville man promoting a "Shallotte Area Merchants Gold Rush" coupon book left town, but problems with the telephone sales operation linger.

Shallotte Police Chief Wayne Campbell said that the checks promoter Tommy Tierney paid people who delivered the coupon booklets were not made good. He has since been negotiating with Tierney's attorney to secure the funds for the "14 or 15" checks that totaled approximately \$2,000.

"I've spent the past several weeks trying to track him down all over the South. He finally had an attorney return my call," said the chief. "We're trying to negotiate something."

In mid-December Tierney's outfit offered a booklet of coupons worth about \$600 to telephone customers for prices that started out at \$24.95 and were later reduced to \$19.95. But several participating merchants withdrew, saying the deal had been

misrepresented to them. The enterprise also drew criticism when Shallotte Mayor Beamon suggested the "Shallotte Area" title was misleading, since most coupons came from a broad area including Horry County, S.C., Columbus, New Hanover and Brunswick counties.

Tierney's sales crew promoted the coupon as benefitting the "Veterans Vigil of Honor," with \$3 from each booklet going to the alleged charitable organization and the rest to Tele-Mart Ltd.

The sales team had operated out of room behind Thomas Drugs in Shallotte, paying two months' rent in advance and leaving before the rental period ended.

Tierney left his name and address with the Shallotte Police Department, along with a pledge to refund the cost of unused booklets to the purchasers.

In December, Campbell said local merchants he had contacted planned to honor the coupon booklets. He was uncertain how many had been sold in the area.

Water Service Interrupted

Most Shallotte businesses and residences north of United Carolina Bank's main office on U.S. 17 were without water for several hours Friday morning after a gasket blew out of a T fitting on the 6-inch water main in front of UCB before 7 a.m. Tackling the repairs above are town (from left) employees Harvey Cham-

plon and Albert Hughes, maintenance supervisor. While the cold snap resulted in frozen and burst pipes across the county last week, Hughes said the gasket problem was not weather-related. More permanent repairs will be made to the street, which is temporarily patched.

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