



EL DORADO COUNTY FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT

PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release: Wednesday, August 12, 2026

Date/Time of Occurrence: 08/11/2026 5:39 p.m.

Nature of Occurrence: Quick Actions by EMT Crew and Off-Duty First Responders Save Driver from Burning Vehicle

Location: Highway 49 / Quarry Trail, Cool, CA 9509

Map Link: <https://maps.app.goo.gl/ZEbgNJTteMwb9gxc9>

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COOL, Calif. — The quick and decisive actions of two emergency medical technicians and two off-duty first responders saved the life of a driver following a vehicle collision and fire Tuesday evening on Highway 49 near Cool.

At approximately 5:39 p.m. on Tuesday, August 11, emergency crews were dispatched to a reported single-vehicle traffic collision on Highway 49 in the Cool area, where a vehicle had left the roadway and struck an oak tree. The first El Dorado County Fire Protection District engine arrived approximately six minutes after dispatch.

Before fire crews arrived, Bay Medic Ambulance EMTs Mason Ray and Rocco Lucchesi were traveling through the area when they observed a vehicle along the roadway with smoke coming from it. Recognizing the potential emergency, they stopped to investigate.

Also arriving at the scene were off-duty El Dorado County Fire Protection District Paramedic Shannon O'Neill and her husband, Grant Gentry, a Fire Apparatus Engineer with CAL FIRE Amador-El Dorado Unit.

The four found the driver still inside the vehicle as fire conditions were rapidly developing. Working together, they immediately removed the driver from the vehicle and moved her to a safe location away from the fire.

Their actions saved the driver's life. By the time the first fire engine arrived from Station 72 in Cool, the vehicle was fully involved in fire. Had the driver not been removed before the arrival of fire crews, she would not have survived the rapidly advancing fire conditions. The District's

incident report states that the actions of the four individuals clearly saved her life because the vehicle was fully involved when the first engine arrived.

Once fire crews arrived, O'Neill provided advanced life support care using equipment from the fire engine. Her continued assistance allowed the engine crew to immediately focus on controlling the vehicle fire and preventing it from spreading into the surrounding vegetation.

The patient was subsequently transported by Georgetown Fire Protection District Medic 61 to a landing zone, where care was transferred to CALSTAR 3 for air transport to Sutter Roseville Medical Center.

El Dorado County Fire Protection District firefighters worked with CAL FIRE Amador-El Dorado Unit to extinguish the vehicle fire, which presented a significant threat of spreading into nearby vegetation. The California Highway Patrol also responded and is investigating the collision.

The vehicle fire proved difficult to extinguish due in part to burning fuel leaking from a damaged fuel tank. Fire crews ultimately contained and extinguished the fire without extension into the surrounding wildland.

"The actions taken before our crews arrived unquestionably saved a life," Fire Chief Brad Gates said. "Mason, Rocco, Shannon and Grant encountered a rapidly worsening situation and acted immediately to remove someone from a vehicle that, within minutes, was completely involved in fire. Their willingness to step forward, work together and put their training into action exemplifies the very best of the fire and emergency medical services profession."

The El Dorado County Fire Protection District provides fire protection, emergency medical services, rescue, and community risk reduction services across 347 square miles of western and central El Dorado County, serving communities including Placerville, Diamond Springs, El Dorado, Shingle Springs, Pollock Pines, Camino, Pleasant Valley, Cool, Coloma, Lotus, Pilot Hill, Oak Hill, Strawberry, and Kyburz.

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