

The Greater Hartford TIM Coalition will be conducting an After Action Review of the February 17th tanker fire that occurred on I-91 in the Town of Rocky Hill at the Coalition Meeting on March 26th. As CROG has recently begun the Diversionary Planning update with stakeholders this incident provides an opportunity for Coalition Members to hear first hand what resources were needed and how the Incident Command System functioned. Panel members will include First Responder Personnel from this incident.

I-91 in Rocky Hill was closed for about 12 hours Sunday after a Tanker truck hauling gasoline caught fire

By DAVID OWENS and JORDAN OTERO SISSON
| HARTFORD COURANT | FEB 17, 2019 | 6:14 PM

I-91 North in Rocky Hill was closed for about 12 hours Sunday, after a tanker truck hauling about 9,000 gallons of gasoline caught fire, snarling traffic for thousands of travelers.

The fire occurred between Exits 23 and 24, and state police said no injuries were reported.



A tanker truck hauling 8,000 gallons of gasoline burns on I-91 in Rocky Hill Sunday morning. (Courtesy Rocky Hill Fire Department)

State environmental protection crews are assessing the damage caused by gasoline that ran off into the ground adjacent to the highway and a stream, Rocky Hill Fire Chief Michael Garrahy said.

State Department of Transportation crews are assessing the asphalt on which the truck sat, a damaged guardrail and a light post that melted, and Eversource crews are assessing high voltage lines that pass over the scene of the fire, the chief said.

One northbound lane reopened at about 1:30 p.m. Sunday, with the rest reopening at about 6 p.m.

Rocky Hill police were flooded with 911 calls reporting an explosion at about 6 a.m.

State troopers from the Hartford barracks were the first on the scene and closed the highway.

Garrahy, the first firefighter to arrive, said he assessed the situation and decided to let the tanker truck burn. There are water supply issues on the highway, he said, and there were no people or buildings that had to be protected. Three 32,000-kilovolt Eversource transmission lines passing over the fire scene were also a concern, he said. And battling the blaze could have caused gasoline to spread further from the scene, he said.

The fire's cause remains under investigation.

"There was really no saving the tanker," he said. The fire burned for about three hours, Garrahy estimated. The highway was closed in both directions until the fire was out.

I-91 Rocky Hill Tanker fire 2-17-19

Although much of the gasoline was consumed in the blaze, firefighters and environmental crews placed absorbent booms downstream to collect as much gasoline runoff as possible.

Garrahy said he did not talk to the driver, but firefighters did find the truck's fire extinguisher near the front of the truck. It was empty.

The fire largely consumed the truck cab and the tank trailer. Rocky Hill police evacuated a portion of the Lexington Estates condominiums because of concern about smoke and fumes from the fire. People were able to return to their homes after several hours, Sgt. Steve Morgan said.



Fire consumes a tanker truck on I-91 North in Rocky Hill Sunday morning. (Provided by Connecticut State Police)



Crews at the scene of a tanker truck fire on I-91 North in Rocky Hill Sunday morning. (Hartford Courant)



Smoke rising from a tanker truck fire on I-91 as viewed from Starr Drive in Rocky Hill at 7:14 a.m. Sunday. (Provided by Judy Hartling) (Judy Hartling)

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A tanker fire stopped traffic for hours Sunday on I-91 in Rocky Hill.

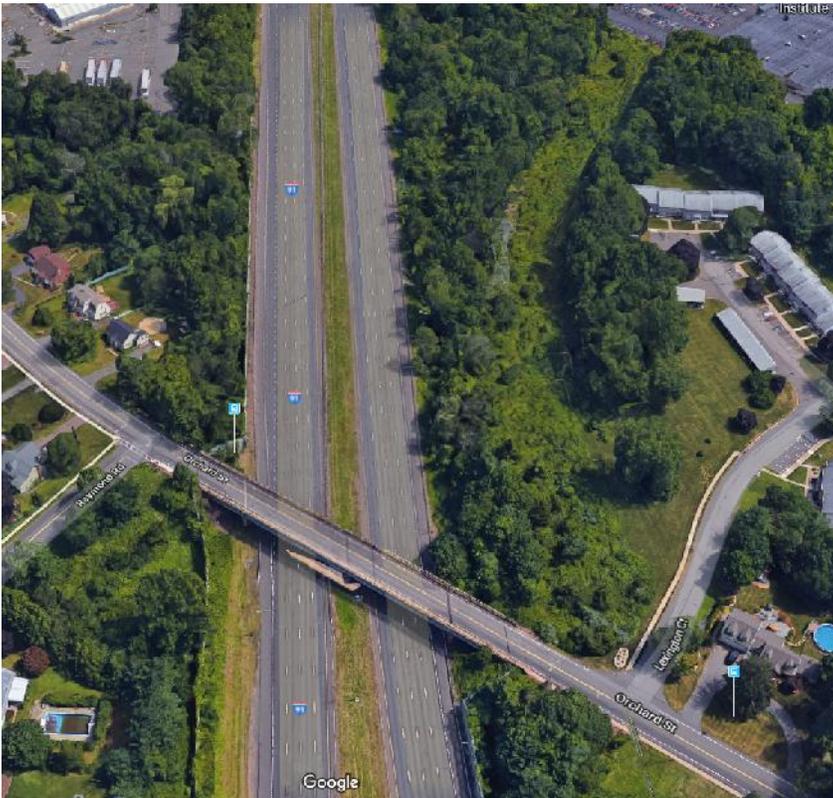


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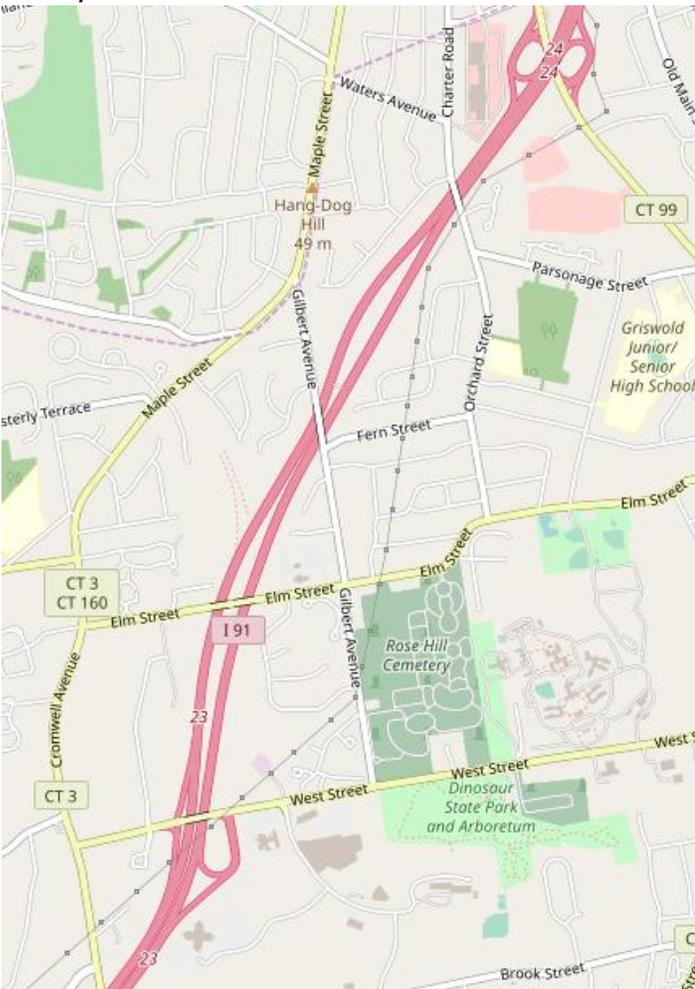
Photo CTDOT

I-91 Rocky Hill Tanker fire 2-17-19



Google Maps

Vicinity of tanker fire - I-91 North between Orchard St overpass and Exit 24, Route 99 (Silas Deane Highway)



I-91 North between Exits 23 and 24

Tanker fire closes I-91, causes evacuations

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ROCKY HILL – The driver of a tanker is okay after his truck caught fire early this morning.

"We were just in shock to see the tanker on fire and the highway was closed," says Matthew Lanciotta, who lives near the Orchard Road overpass in Rocky Hill, which overlooks where the truck pulled over. "It was crazy."

The tanker truck caught fire on I-91 North just after 6 o'clock Sunday morning. People living nearby say they heard a few explosions that shook their houses.

"I look out the window and see all the smoke happening," says another person who woke up to the explosion, Tom Saunders. "It was just scary."

Even closer to the explosion are the Lexington Estates Condos, located right next to I-91 North. Elaine Lukas didn't want to be on camera, but tells us she woke up to flames and smoke right outside her window.



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"Then I heard somebody yell "Get away! Get away!" loud like people were talking on the highway," says Lukas. "Then there was a banging at my door."

The Condos were evacuated and Rocky Hill High School was opened as a warming shelter. Down in Haddam Neck, another viewer, Neal Perron, sent us drone footage of the smoke. You see it drifting over the horizon 30 miles away. For more than two hours, firefighters could do nothing but wait.



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"Command made the decision that we were going to take up a defensive position," said Frank Kelley from the Rocky Hill Fire Department.

Trucks sprayed water on the woods nearby to stop the fire that had started to spread to the brush along the highway. Finally, firefighters finished putting out the fire with foam trailers. Now, many state agencies are figuring out what the greater impact of the fire was.

"We're going to have to assess the soil contamination around the area," says Jeff Chandler, DEEP's Supervisor Emergency Response. "We do have impact to a stream and a distributary to the Connecticut River."

DEEP says they'll be trying to contain the leak for at least 12 hours.

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