On July 11th, 2020, Texas A&M Forest Service (TFS) resources responded to the OxBow Fire in Hall County, Texas. During initial attack operations, a Type 2 Dozer blew a Hydraulic line on the blade and was subsequently damaged during recovery efforts.

Figure 1: Winch line ran over the dozer cab to attempt the lift the disabled blade.

Narrative

During initial attack activities on the OxBow fire a Type-2 Dozer, a Caterpillar D6, suffered a blown hydraulic hose that supports the blade lift cylinder. The operator was able to lift the blade and track the dozer to a safety zone before losing all hydraulics. The decision was made to attempt to lift the blade with the dozer's winch, a technique taught in the dozer operator course for recovering a disabled plow on Type 4 Tractor Plows. The winch on the D6 is rated for 10-tons and is mounted on the rear of the dozer. The winch line was routed up, over the cab of the dozer, and connected to a chain attached to the blade. When the operator attempted to lift the blade with the winch, the after-market air conditioning condenser cage was crushed, causing substantial damage to the AC components inside.

Figure 2: Picture showing the damage to the AC components once the fire cage was removed.

Lessons Learned

- Not all techniques taught during a dozer operator course will work for every piece of equipment.
- Become familiar with specific recovery techniques for each piece of equipment you may work with.
- Train on equipment recovery prior to the need to use it in the field.
- Know the capabilities of the implements on your equipment. A 10-ton winch can cause substantial damage.
- Experience doesn't always provide insight to every potential outcome for a situation.

Scenario

You lose all hydraulic power on the line and need to make it to a safety zone. Your blade is dug into the ground. What do you do? How are you preparing for this?