

September 3, 2019

How to Ruin Your Day

You're rolling down the highway, enjoying the scenery as you hum along with the tunes on the radio. The sun is shining and you're looking forward to dropping the backhoe you're hauling at the construction site before you pull into your favorite café for a bite of lunch.

The overpass ahead looks just like the last dozen you've passed under on I-35 when, suddenly and quite violently, you discover that this particular bridge is actually a few inches lower. The upper arm of the backhoe has smashed into the bridge above with a sickening crash and your semi is yanked to an abrupt and ferocious halt.



The bridge carrying 305th Street in Wright County, IA was seriously damaged and WHKS engineers were asked to plan the emergency repairs. Two girders were smashed beyond repair and two others would require straightening and strengthening.

It took several months and the process was complicated. The bridge itself was closed but since traffic had to be maintained on the Interstate, counterweights were installed as the two girders that had been destroyed were removed. Two 10-ton water tanks, placed over the joints in the girders, kept the remaining bridge structure from lifting when the weight of the damaged beams was removed.



Individual lanes were closed on the Interstate as repairs were made but the highway was closed completely overnight as the replacement girders were installed. When the bridge was finally reopened, the two girders had been replaced along with portions of the concrete deck and curb and the safety railing above had been removed and replaced.

And truckers double check the heights of their loads.

