



KATIE FALKENBERG For The Times

CALTRANS WORKERS inspect a bridge over the 134 Freeway on Sunday after a gasoline tanker was hit and caught fire late Saturday, closing westbound lanes until Sunday night. Eastbound lanes reopened early Sunday.

L A JIMES - 4/9/12

Gasoline tanker fire closes 134 Freeway in Glendale

A man is arrested on suspicion of drunk driving after hitting the rig late Saturday.

By **ABBY SEWELL**
AND **SAM QUINONES**

A gasoline tanker burst into flames, shutting down the westbound 134 Freeway on Sunday, after it was struck by an allegedly drunk driver near the L.A. Zoo late Saturday night.

The driver of the car, Hakop Maghakyan, 25, of Glendale, was arrested on suspicion of driving under the influence, officials said.

The fire began shortly after 11 p.m. Saturday when the two-tank trailer rig carrying 8,600 gallons of fuel

was rear-ended by a Honda driven by Maghakyan at high speed just east of the 5 Freeway in Glendale, according to the California Highway Patrol.

The rear tank hit a guardrail, overturned and ignited in a spectacular blaze, burning through 6,000 gallons of fuel before firefighters could quench it. The Honda also burst into flames. Maghakyan, the tanker driver and a passenger in the Honda all scrambled to safety without injury.

About 150 firefighters from the Los Angeles, Burbank and Glendale fire departments needed more than an hour to put out the blaze. Hazardous-materials crews worked to clean up fuel that hadn't burned, recovering about 3,000 gallons. They also cleaned out storm

drains that fuel had seeped into, according to Caltrans officials.

The fire shut down the 134 Freeway overnight. Eastbound lanes reopened early Sunday morning, and the westbound lanes were opened shortly before 10 p.m. Sunday.

Structural engineers from the California Department of Transportation drilled into the bridge connecting the 134 to the southbound 5, which sweeps above the site of the fiery crash, and took core samples from the concrete Sunday afternoon to make sure it had not sustained structural damage. It was deemed safe.

Crews also erected temporary barriers to cordon off the damaged guardrail. Caltrans predicted that the

right shoulder would remain closed for a few days until crews can replace the damaged posts and rail.

Another tanker fire caused more extensive damage to a bridge on the 60 Freeway in Montebello in December. In that case, a truck carrying 8,800 gallons of gasoline caught fire. It exploded in a fireball under the Paramount Boulevard overpass in Montebello.

The bridge in that case was so severely damaged that it had to be demolished. Construction of a new bridge is underway; it is expected to open by mid-June.

abigail.sewell@latimes.com
sam.quinones@latimes.com

Times staff writers Stephen Ceasar and Ari Bloomekatz contributed to this report.