

By Russ Pankonin

The Imperial Republican

Jim Pankonin, Sr., 70, of Imperial remains in critical but stable condition in a Denver, Colo., hospital after a truck rollover accident Wednesday, July 1.

The accident occurred about 11:30 a.m. some 15 miles north of Burlington, Colo., near the Bonny Reservoir state park.

According to a report from the Colorado State Patrol, Pankonin was northbound in a 2003 Kenworth, pulling a trailer loaded with liquid fertilizer.

The unit went off the right side of Highway 385 and down an embankment. The report indicated the unit rotated counter clockwise with the tractor coming back on the roadway.

The tractor then rolled one time and the trailer went over 3/4 of a time, coming to rest facing north just off the side of the side.

Rescue personnel used Jaws of Life to open the truck door and cut off Pankonin's seat belt, which likely saved his life. The roof of the truck was sheared off in the incident.

Pankonin was transported to the hospital in Burlington and then flown out to St. Anthony's Hospital in Denver where he remains hospitalized in the intensive care unit.

His daughter, Sherri Wheeler of Imperial, said Pankonin suffered three broken right ribs, cracked ribs on his left side, a cracked sternum and a punctured lung.

She said he has been on a ventilator since the accident to assist breathing due to the punctured lung. As a result, he has not been able to tell them what happened.

Wheeler said her father is showing improvement but they are anticipating a long recovery from the injuries.

Pankonin was driving for Triple B Commodities of Imperial. He has driven for them for nearly 20 years.

He was hauling a load of liquid fertilizer from Garden City, Kan. to Fort Morgan, Colo.

Triple B owner Don Bernhardt said they don't usually drive that stretch of road. However, road work delays on their normal route has prompted them to use alternate routes to Fort Morgan.

Pankonin is expected to remain in the hospital at least through the week, Wheeler said.

Cards can reach him at St. Anthony's Central Hospital, 4231 West 16th, Denver, CO 80204.