

## Trucker Survives Hours In Subzero Temperature

<http://www.kttn.com/kgozfm/modules/news/article.php?storyid=111054>

---

### **Trucker Survives Hours In Subzero Temperature** **News**

Posted by : Randy

Posted on : 2014/1/10 4:57:24

INDIANAPOLIS (AP) -- Tim Rutledge's eyelid had frozen shut. His voice was hoarse after competing for hours with bitter-cold wind and humming truck engines while screaming for help.



He was losing consciousness, pinned under his rig in sub-zero temperatures at an Indiana truck stop.

The longtime Florida truck driver had crawled under his truck with a hammer to loosen ice from his brakes around 4 a.m. Monday, as record-breaking temperatures swept into the state. But the truck suddenly settled deeper into the snow, pinning him beneath an axle.

The 53-year-old was trapped, helpless as his cellphone rang dozens of times in a coat pocket he couldn't reach. It had been about eight hours. He feared he was near death.

Then his phone suddenly toppled from his pocket, its vibrating ring enough to finally wiggle it free. He was able to scoop it up with his right hand inside a frozen glove, use its voice dial to call a company dispatcher and muster a quiet plea for help.

"I said `Whoever this is, don't hang up on me because it's going to be the last time that I'll be able to call. I can't call out and I can't answer the phone,'" Rutledge said Thursday, recalling his experience as he sat in a leather armchair at IU Health Methodist Hospital in Indianapolis.

Doctors said his body temperature was so low when he arrived at the hospital that just one more hour likely would have been fatal. Yet he was released from the hospital on Thursday and planned to fly back home to Orlando, Fla., with little more than numbness in his left hand and side where the axle had pinned him.

Rutledge noted that the phone calls from his wife, Lisa, began soon after he missed making his typical early morning check-in with her.

"I used to think it was kind of a hassle, but I always called her just so she knew where I was at," he said. "I won't take her for granted now. She saved me."

Rutledge had been driving a load from Florida when he stopped Sunday evening at the truck stop, less than an hour away from his destination. As he slept in his cab, several inches of snow fell and temperatures plunged. He woke up to frozen brakes.

Steve Moseley, a dispatcher with First Coast Express of Jacksonville, Fla., said he feared the worst after numerous calls to Rutledge went unanswered. Moseley answered Rutledge's call for help Monday afternoon, and said his voice grew quieter during their conversation until it dimmed to a whisper.

"At one time I called out to him and he didn't say anything," Moseley said. "That scared me a bit."

His trucking company called the truck stop and emergency workers were summoned to search for

## Trucker Survives Hours In Subzero Temperature

<http://www.kttn.com/kgozfm/modules/news/article.php?storyid=111054>

---

him as temperatures dropped to more than 10 below zero in the area, with wind gusts of 30 mph leading to wind chills of negative 35 or colder.

It took time for workers to find his semi amid the sea of parked trucks at the Pilot Travel Center in Whiteland, just south of Indianapolis.

By the time he reached the hospital, Rutledge's body temperature had fallen to about 86 degrees.

Dr. Timothy Pohlman, a trauma surgeon who treated him, said another hour outside likely would have been fatal for Rutledge. But he said being under the truck likely shielded him somewhat from the dangerous wind gusts.

"I think just the fact that he had to crawl under a semi to figure out why he broke down in a way forced him to do what is taught in a lot of survival courses for people who have to work in extreme environments," Pohlman said.

Pohlman said Rutledge, who somehow emerged without any frostbite injuries, should fully recover.

Rutledge said he was lucky to be alive.

"There was another hand in this," he said. "If my phone would've dropped the other way, I could never have called anyone. If it (the truck) would've sunk any farther, I wouldn't have had a need to call anyone."