

7. The number of students on the bus, which was in excess of the State of Georgia's and the manufacturer's rated passenger-capacities of the vehicle, did not contribute to the accident.
8. Had the caboose been equipped with a radio jack at the south end or the flagman provided with a portable radio, the flagman could have remained on the leading platform during the entire movement. The use of hand signals by the flagman to direct the movement of the train would have permitted him to stay on the leading end of the caboose during the entire movement.
9. If the flagman had elected to communicate with the engineer by hand signals, the engineer would have been able to see his signals.
10. The failure of the flagman to notify the engineer of the collision and/or apply the airbrake valve available to him in the caboose allowed the train to push the schoolbus over 300 feet from the point of impact before stopping. That movement contributed to the severity of injuries and losses of life.
11. Formal guidelines had not been promulgated to assist traincrews in the selection of the use of radio or hand signals to direct the movement of trains.

PROBABLE CAUSE

The National Transportation Safety Board determines that the probable cause of the accident was the failure of the schoolbus driver to stop his vehicle short of the track until it was safe to proceed, and the failure of the flagman of the train to guard the unprotected crossing.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The National Transportation Safety Board recommends that:

1. The Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) promulgate regulations governing railroad operating rules for the use of radio communications and flagging when trains are being pushed (shoved) across grade crossings. (Recommendation R-75-31)
2. The FRA promulgate regulations to require that if radios are to be utilized for directing rearward movement of trains, the radios must be installed so that they can be used by an employee from the leading platform. (Recommendation R-75-32)

H-75-31 on next page

3. The Polk School District, State of Georgia, establish a formal procedure for frequent field checks of schoolbus drivers to insure their compliance with the District's safety policies and the State of Georgia's Uniform Rule of the Roads. ✓

(Recommendation H-75-~~1~~ 31 (RL)
(H-75-31)

BY THE NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

/s/ JOHN H. REED
Chairman

/s/ FRANCIS H. McADAMS
Member

/s/ LOUIS M. THAYER
Member

/s/ ISABEL A. BURGESS
Member

/s/ WILLIAM R. HALEY
Member

July 7, 1975