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NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD
WASHINGTON, D.C.

FOR RELEASE: 6:30 A.M., E.D.T., DECEMBER 2, 1975

(202) 426-8787

ISSUED: December 2, 1975

Forwarded to:

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State of California
1120 N Street
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SAFETY RECOMMENDATION(S)

H-75-37 through H-75-38

On February 28, 1975, at 7:40 a.m., P.d.t., the first of a series of multiple-vehicle collisions occurred on State Route 91 near Corona, California. The collisions occurred in fog. Eighty-four vehicles were involved, and 23 persons were injured.

Portable traffic controls employed at the time of the collisions by the California Highway Patrol (CHP) consisted of two 4-foot by 4-foot signs that displayed the word, "FOG."

Although these signs warned drivers of a hazard, they did not provide the drivers with enough information to deal with the hazardous situation ahead. Since there was no speed limit drivers made individual and varied decisions as to the safe speed for their vehicles.

Research 1/ conducted by the California Department of Transportation (CAL-DOT) showed that advisory posting of speeds in fog conditions had some effect on traffic. Further study 2/ revealed that drivers approved of advisory signs. In more recent work 3/ on an automatic fog warning system, the CAL-DOT recognized the need for such a system.

At present, the CAL-DOT is not engaged in continuing research to develop an automatic fog warning system even though it recognizes the need for such a system.

1/ California State Transportation Agency, Reduced Visibility (Fog) Study (1967).

2/ Hulbert S., and Beers, J., Research Development of Changeable Messages for Freeway Traffic Control. Institute of Transportation and Traffic Engineering, School of Engineering and Applied Sciences, University of California, Los Angeles, August 1971.

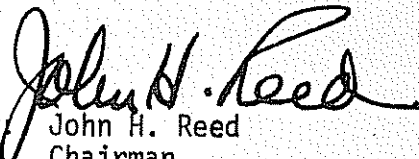
3/ California Department of Transportation. Automatic Detection for Fog Warning Signs, 1973.

A relatively inexpensive fog warning system (inexpensive fog detectors, timers, changeable message signs, etc.) that can be applied to long sections (5 miles with extensions of 2 1/2 miles) of highway is available. The system was developed by the FHWA in 1972. ^{4/}

Therefore, the National Transportation Safety Board recommends that the California Department of Transportation:

1. Continue to work on a fog warning system to inform motorists of fog ahead and to provide an appropriate speed limit. (Recommendation H-75-37) (Class II, Priority Followup)
2. Conduct an engineering study in conjunction with the California Highway Patrol to determine the most feasible locations for the installation of such systems. (Recommendation H-75-38) (Class II, Priority Followup)

REED, Chairman, McADAMS, THAYER, BURGESS, and HALEY, Members, concurred in the above recommendations.


By, John H. Reed
Chairman

THESE RECOMMENDATIONS WILL BE RELEASED TO THE PUBLIC ON THE ISSUE DATE SHOWN ABOVE. NO PUBLIC DISSEMINATION OF THIS DOCUMENT SHOULD BE MADE PRIOR TO THAT DATE.

^{4/} Adverse Weather and Visibility Hazard Warning Systems, Office of Traffic Operations, FHWA, September 1972.