

Log H-392

**NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD  
WASHINGTON, D.C.**

ISSUED: April 12, 1984

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Forwarded to:

Mr. Mark Brant  
Executive Director  
New York State Association  
for Retarded Children  
393 Delaware Avenue  
Delmar, New York 12054  
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SAFETY RECOMMENDATION(S)

H-84-10

On April 5, 1983, a 2-ton flatbed truck, loaded with a farm plow and towing another farm plow, was traveling southbound on a two-lane, two-way rural highway near Holmesville, New York. An adult passenger bus, with 20 persons on board, was following the flatbed truck at a distance of about 100 feet. As both vehicles entered a 3,820-foot-radius right curve, the towed plow suddenly separated from its hitch attachments and veered left into the opposing northbound traffic lane. A northbound tractor car-carrier semitrailer struck the plow, rupturing the tractor's left front tire. As a result, the driver lost control of the vehicle, and the vehicle veered left across the highway centerline and collided head-on with the bus. The busdriver and four bus passengers were killed. The truckdriver of the car carrier and 9 bus passengers were hospitalized with various degrees of injury. Six bus passengers were treated and released. 1/

The bus was owned and operated by the Community Work Shop (CWS), an affiliate of the New York State Association for Retarded Children. The busdriver's adjustable seat was the only occupant seat equipped and required to be equipped with a seat belt.

The CWS had no current policy concerning the use of seatbelts by busdrivers on official duty. Reportedly, the driver of the accident bus habitually wore his seatbelt when operating the vehicle. Even though the use of a seatbelt would not have prevented the driver from receiving fatal injuries in this accident, it is important that all drivers wear the seatbelt that is provided whenever the bus is moving. The ability to maintain control of the bus in an emergency or crash situation is seriously jeopardized if the driver is thrown from the seat. In a 1972 crash in Virginia, 2/ a car ran a stop sign and hit a large

1/ For more detailed information, read: Highway Accident Report--"Valley Supply Company Truck Towing Farm Plow, Anchor Freight Inc. Car-Carrier Truck, New York State Association for Retarded Children Bus Collisions and Fire, State Route 8, near Holmesville, New York, April 5, 1983" (NTSB/HAR-84/01).

2/ Highway Accident Report--"Schoolbus-Automobile Collision and Fire Near Reston, Virginia, February 29, 1972" (NTSB-HAR-72-2).

schoolbus. The bus ran off the road and partially overturned. All the bus occupants were injured. The Board found that "the second collision of the bus, into the embankment, was caused by loss of driver control; the nonuse of available seatbelts by the driver prevented the regaining of control." Thus, CWS should require their drivers to wear their seatbelts whenever the vehicle is in motion.

As a result of its investigation of this accident, the National Transportation Safety Board recommends that the New York State Association for Retarded Children:

Require all drivers to wear seatbelts while operating the Association's vehicles. (Class II, Priority Action) (H-84-10)

The National Transportation Safety Board is an independent Federal agency with the statutory responsibility ". . .to promote transportation safety by conducting independent accident investigations and by formulating safety improvement recommendations" (P.L. 93-633). The Safety Board is vitally interested in any actions taken as a result of its safety recommendations, and the Board would appreciate a response from you regarding action taken or contemplated with respect to the recommendations in this letter.

BURNETT, Chairman, and BURSLEY and GROSE, Members, concurred in these recommendations. GOLDMAN, Vice Chairman, and ENGEN, Member, did not participate.

By: Jim Burnett  
Chairman