

Long H-334

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD
WASHINGTON, D.C.

ISSUED: May 4, 1982

Forwarded to:

Honorable Hugh L. Carey
Governor of New York
Albany, New York 12224

SAFETY RECOMMENDATION(S)

H-82-14

(summary)
About 2:18 a.m. e.s.t, on March 14, 1982, at a railroad/highway grade crossing on Herricks Road in Nassau County, a 19-year-old male drove his southbound van, occupied by nine other teenagers, around the lowered automatic gate with flashing lights, onto the main line tracks of the Long Island Railroad, and into the path of an oncoming train. The driver and eight passengers were killed and one passenger was critically injured.

Accident statistics indicate that in the 3-year period from 1978 to 1980 there were 438 accident/incidents at railroad/highway grade crossings in the State of New York. These accident/incidents resulted in 50 fatalities. Also, while the number of fatalities and injuries resulting from grade crossing accidents have declined nationally over the last 3 years, they have not in the State of New York.

To reduce the number of accidents involving collisions of trains and highway vehicles at grade crossings which result in fatalities and injuries, a uniform, coordinated effort is needed. The education, enforcement, engineering, and legislative effort that is required involves interaction among agencies that may ordinarily not become involved in each other's activities. Trucking associations, State and local departments of transportation, labor groups, enforcement agencies, legislatures, railroads, highway carriers, and shippers should participate in this effort. Many of these agencies are already working together in 30 State "Operation Lifesaver" programs which are being coordinated by the National Safety Council (NSC). In locations where this type of program has been implemented, the results have been impressive and encouraging in terms of reduced accidents, fatalities, and injuries at grade crossings. 1/

New York is 1 of 20 States that has not implemented an "Operation Lifesaver" program. The Safety Board is aware that some preliminary discussion about initiating an "Operation Lifesaver" program in New York has been held with the State's Office of Highway Safety and that an interim State coordinator has been designated. However, it is our understanding that no definite plans have been made to go ahead with the program. The Safety Board believes that New York's participation in the voluntary "Operation Lifesaver" program would increase safety for highway and railroad users throughout the State.

1/ Railroad/Highway Accident Report--"Collision of Chicago, Rock Island and Pacific Railroad Company Freight Train with an Automobile, Des Moines, Iowa, July 1, 1976" (NTSB-RHR-77-2); and "Operation Lifesaver-A Program to Reduce Accidents and Deaths at Railroad-Highway Crossings," Traffic Safety, Vol. 79, No. 8, August 1979.


RHR-82-2

3494-A

Therefore, the National Transportation Safety Board recommends that the State of New York:

Adopt an "Operation Lifesaver" program as a foundation for a statewide effort to reduce train/highway vehicle accidents at railroad/highway grade crossings in New York. (Class II, Priority Action) (H-82-14)

BURNETT, Chairman, GOLDMAN, Vice Chairman, McADAMS and BURSLEY, Members, concurred in this recommendation.


By: Jim Burnett
Chairman