

Log H 315

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD
WASHINGTON, D.C.

ISSUED: August 9, 1982

Forwarded to:

Mr. Ronald Pelvel
President, Bulk Commodities Division
Pacific Intermountain Express Company
P.O. Box 8004
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SAFETY RECOMMENDATION(S)

H-82-19 and -20

About 8:10 a.m., m.s.t., on November 14, 1981, a westbound tractor cargo tank semitrailer loaded with approximately 9,000 gallons of gasoline sideswiped an eastbound tractor-lowboy semitrailer while attempting to negotiate a right-hand curve on a three-lane highway. When the cargo tank of the westbound combination vehicle was punctured during impact, fire erupted and rapidly engulfed the two accident vehicles and a passenger car not involved in the impact. In addition to extensive property damage, eight vehicle occupants were killed and two seriously injured as a result of the postcrash fire. 1/

The Pacific Intermountain Express (PIE) driver held a valid Oklahoma chauffeur's license and a valid Colorado Class A license. A review of the driver's qualification file revealed that the PIE driver had been employed as a truck driver since 1969 and that he had been involved in one previous accident in May 1976. His driving record indicated that he had received the following traffic violations: an inspection sticker violation in Oklahoma on April 9, 1978; three speeding violations in Oklahoma on February 29, March 27, and May 3, 1980; and a speeding violation in Colorado on October 16, 1981.

Based on information from his employment application and his Colorado citation, it was determined that at least three of the four speeding citations were issued when the driver was operating a commercial vehicle. The PIE driver reported only the first two of the speeding citations on his PIE employment application, dated October 9. The third speeding citation was obtained 7 days after the driver was hired. PIE officials were unaware of the last two speeding citations received by the driver until after this accident. The Federal Motor Carrier Safety Regulations (FMCSR), 49 CFR 391, require a motor carrier to conduct appropriate investigations and inquiries on the commercial vehicle operators it employs. The investigation must include inquiries into the employee's driving record for the preceding 3 years. The inquiry to the state agencies on driving records must be made within 30 days from the date of the driver's employment. PIE had hired the accident driver on October 9, 1981, but had not completed the request for the employee's driving record when the accident occurred on November 14, 1981.

1/ For more information, read Highway Accident Report—"Pacific Intermountain Express (PIE) Tractor Cargo Tank Semitrailer/Eagle/F.B. Truck Lines, Inc., Lowboy Semitrailer Collision and Fire, U.S. Route 50 Near Canon City, Colorado, November 14, 1981" (NTSB-HAR-82-3).

After filing his incomplete application on October 9, 1981, and while his record was being checked, the PIE driver was permitted to drive the bulk hazardous material tractor-cargo tank semitrailer. The PIE driver, with four speeding convictions, was not disqualified from driving a bulk hazardous material commercial vehicle. The Safety Board believes it is essential that carriers verify the information reported on an employee's application in order to identify potentially high-risk drivers and to screen out those applicants considered unacceptable for driving bulk hazardous material vehicles. The Safety Board further believes that motor carriers should establish qualifications and standard procedures for selecting new employees and ensure that the established qualifications and procedures are adhered to before a driver is allowed to perform driving duties.


Careful monitoring of newly hired drivers is needed to assure that any indication of unsafe driver performance is identified. Motor carriers also should develop appropriate written disciplinary policies to correct deficiencies identified in the monitoring program. For example, the PIE driver's manual, given to all new drivers, states that the company speed limit is 55 mph. However, the manual does not specify what number of speeding violations would be considered unacceptable for commercial drivers and does not specify what disciplinary action would be taken for repeated violations or for delayed reporting of such violations to the company.

Therefore, the National Transportation Safety Board recommends that the Pacific Intermountain Express Company:

Establish qualifications and standard procedures for selecting new hire hazardous material drivers, and insure that the established qualifications and procedures are adhered to before a driver is allowed to perform driving duties. (Class II, Priority Action) (H-82-19)

Incorporate in its Driver's Manual for the Bulk Commodity Division, a requirement for drivers transporting bulk hazardous materials to promptly report the receipt of specified traffic citations, and a statement of company policy as to disciplinary actions which will be taken in the event of speeding or other unsafe driving practices. (Class II, Priority Action) (H-82-20)

BURNETT, Chairman, GOLDMAN, Vice Chairman, and McADAMS and BURSLEY, Members, concurred in these recommendations.


By: Jim Burnett
Chairman