

Log H-315A

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD
WASHINGTON, D.C.

ISSUED: August 9, 1982

Forwarded to:

Mr. Clifford J. Harvison
Managing Director
National Tank Truck Carriers, Inc.
1616 P Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C.

SAFETY RECOMMENDATION(S)

H-82-21

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 driver of the hazardous material vehicle had been employed as a part-time truckdriver by Kimball S. Call 2/ since October 9, 1981. On the average, he drove two round trips each week from Gunnison to Dupont for which he was paid a fixed price. He drove approximately 400 miles each trip and made the trips at various times during the week, sometimes on weekends.

A review of the driving history of the Pacific Intermountain Express (PIE) driver revealed that he had received four previous moving traffic violations from February 1980 through October 1981, all of which were speeding citations. 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 driver reported two of the speeding citations on the PIE employment application, dated October 9, 1981. The third speeding citation was obtained 7 days after the driver was hired.

1/ For more detailed 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).

2/ K. S. Call leased the vehicle from Universal Leasing Company and operated under the intrastate authorization of Pacific Intermountain Express.


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 National Tank Carriers, Inc.:

Disseminate to its membership, especially hazardous material carriers, the circumstances of this accident and urge the member companies to establish qualifications and standard procedures for selecting new operators of hazardous material vehicles. (Class II, Priority Action)
(H-82-21)

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


By: Jim Burnett
Chairman