

Log H-569F



National Transportation Safety Board

Washington, D. C. 20594

Safety Recommendation

Date: October 28, 1992

In Reply Refer To: H-92-96

Mr. Paul Verkuil
President
American Automobile Association
1000 AAA Drive
Heathrow, Florida 32746-5063

About 9:10 a.m. on December 11, 1990, a tractor-semitrailer in the southbound lanes of I-75 near Calhoun, Tennessee, struck the rear of another tractor-semitrailer that had slowed because of fog. The uninjured truckdrivers exited their vehicles and attempted to check for damage. After the initial collision, an automobile struck the rear of the second truck and was in turn struck in the rear by another tractor-semitrailer. Fire ensued and consumed two trucks and the automobile. Meanwhile, in the northbound lanes of I-75, an automobile struck the rear of another automobile that had slowed because of fog. Then, a pickup truck and two other automobiles became involved in the chain-reaction rear end collision. No fatalities, injuries, or fires occurred. Subsequently, 99 vehicles in the northbound and southbound lanes were involved in multiple-vehicle chain-reaction collisions that killed 12 people and injured 42 others.¹

According to the testimony at the National Transportation Safety Board special fog hearing, only a fraction of U.S. highways have limited visibility-prone areas that require strict traffic control. Nevertheless, drivers should be familiar with traffic control devices on roads subject to limited visibility and strict traffic control. From the investigation of other limited-visibility accidents and the special fog hearing testimony, the Safety Board has learned that many States have implemented countermeasures for recurring limited-visibility conditions. Those countermeasures vary, and the disparity among States could cause driver confusion and result in nonuniform driver response. Since preventing limited-visibility accidents involving multiple-vehicle collisions requires uniform driver response, countermeasures should be similar nationwide to minimize driver confusion.

¹For more detailed information, read Highway Accident Report--*Multiple-Vehicle Collisions and Fire during Limited Visibility (Fog) on Interstate 75 near Calhoun, Tennessee, on December 11, 1990* (NTSB/HAR-92/02).

In reviewing driver license manuals from States in which it had recently investigated limited-visibility-related accidents, the Safety Board discovered inconsistencies in guidance for driving in fog and other limited-visibility conditions. The Safety Board believes that uniform specific guidance for driving during fog and limited-visibility conditions should be developed and incorporated in driver license manuals and tests. The Safety Board also believes that the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), the Federal Highway Administration, the American Association of Motor Vehicle Administrators (AAMVA), the American Automobile Association, and the American Driver and Traffic Safety Education Association should cooperate in reviewing and updating driver license, educational, and remedial training materials to ensure that guidance for driving during limited-visibility conditions is uniform and complete; that NHTSA and the AAMVA should develop model test questions for licensing examinations on driving during limited-visibility conditions; and that the AAMVA should develop inserts concerning countermeasures that motorists should consider when driving during fog and other limited-visibility conditions and advise its members to enclose such inserts with driver license renewals, motor vehicle registration renewals, and similar mailings.

Therefore, the National Transportation Safety Board recommends that the American Automobile Association:

In cooperation with the Federal Highway Administration, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, the American Association of Motor Vehicle Administrators, and the American Driver and Traffic Safety Education Association, review and update driver license, educational (including Triptik maps), and remedial training materials to ensure that guidance for driving during limited-visibility conditions is uniform and complete.
(Class II, Priority Action) (H-92-96)

Also, the Safety Board issued Safety Recommendation H-92-86 to the U.S. Department of Transportation; H-92-87 and -88 to the Federal Highway Administration; H-92-89 and -90 to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration; I-92-1 and -2 to the Research and Special Programs Administration; H-92-91 to the Tennessee Department of Transportation; H-92-92 to the Tennessee Highway Patrol; H-92-93 through -95 to the American Association of Motor Vehicle Administrators; I-92-3 to Hercules, Incorporated; I-92-4 to the Charleston Volunteer Fire Department; and H-92-97 to the American Driver and Traffic Safety Education Association.

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" (Public Law 93-633). The Safety Board is vitally interested in any action taken as a result of its safety recommendations. Therefore, it would appreciate a response from you regarding action taken or contemplated with respect to the recommendation in this letter. Please refer to Safety Recommendation H-92-96 in your reply.

VOGT, Chairman, COUGHLIN, Vice Chairman, and LAUBER, HART, and HAMMERSCHMIDT, Members, concurred in this recommendation.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'C. W. Vogt', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

By: Carl W. Vogt
Chairman