

Log I-100B



## National Transportation Safety Board

Washington, D. C. 20594

### Safety Recommendation

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Date: October 28, 1992

In Reply Refer To: I-92-4

Mr. Dave Thompson  
Chief  
Charleston Volunteer Fire Department  
Post Office Box 309  
Charleston, Tennessee 37310

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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.<sup>1</sup>

When the Charleston Volunteer Fire Department arrived at the accident site, firefighters observed the burning vehicle carrying the dicumyl peroxide and tried to extinguish the fire with water. No firefighters first attempted to determine whether the vehicle was carrying hazardous cargo or whether it was safe to apply water. Had the cargo been water reactive, the firefighters could have significantly increased the severity of the postaccident conditions. At minimum, first responders should try to identify the cargo from placards on the vehicle and to contact its driver for shipping papers or other documents.

At the time of the Calhoun accident, the Charleston firefighter-in-charge had received minimal training in fighting fires that involved hazardous materials. Because the Charleston Volunteer Fire Department is an all-volunteer organization, no assurance existed that a firefighter with basic hazardous materials training would

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<sup>1</sup>For 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).

be among those responding to an accident. Eleven members have since received a 12-hour basic hazardous materials course; however, the department has no plan to provide basic hazardous materials training for the other 19 volunteers. While not every volunteer fire department may need a specialized hazardous materials response unit, the National Transportation Safety Board is concerned that not all Charleston personnel have been provided with minimum hazardous materials training. The Safety Board believes that the Charleston Volunteer Fire Department should provide its personnel with the training necessary to identify hazardous materials in accidents, to recognize the immediate dangers posed, and to determine appropriate initial emergency response actions.

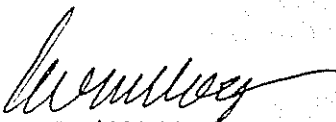
Therefore, the National Transportation Safety Board recommends that the Charleston Volunteer Fire Department:

Provide all personnel with the training necessary to identify hazardous materials in accidents, to recognize the immediate dangers posed, and to determine appropriate initial emergency response actions. (Class II, Priority Action) (I-92-4)

Also, the Safety Board issued Safety Recommendations 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 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; H-92-96 to the American Automobile Association; 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 I-92-4 in your reply.

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

  
By: Carl W. Vogt  
Chairman