



# National Transportation Safety Board

Washington, D.C. 20594  
Safety Recommendation

A-514D

Date: April 14, 1988

In reply refer to: H-88-6

Mr. John Koci  
President  
Graebel Van Lines, Inc.  
720 Third Street  
Wausau, Wisconsin 54402-8002

About 1:45 p.m. on May 4, 1987, while traveling eastbound on Interstate 10 (I-10) in Beaumont, Texas, a tractor-semitrailer operated by Graebel Van Lines, Inc. (GVL), jackknifed in the center lane, veered leftward across the left lane and median strip, and struck a Trailways bus traveling westbound on I-10 in the left lane. A small fire which started in the bus below the driver's seating area was quickly extinguished by a passerby. The busdriver and 5 bus passengers sustained fatal injuries, 17 bus passengers sustained serious to minor injuries, and 6 bus passengers were not injured. The truckdriver and helper sustained moderate and minor injuries, respectively. It was raining at the time of the accident. 1/

During its investigation, the Safety Board learned that the speedometer on the tractor had been inoperative for some time before the accident. Federal regulations require that commercial vehicles engaged in interstate operation be equipped with working speedometers to ensure that truckdrivers are aware of the vehicle speeds on a continuous basis to comply with all local and State speed ordinances. Although commercial drivers probably can estimate the speed of the vehicle with considerable accuracy without reference to a speedometer, the instrument is essential to the safe operation of large vehicles during inclement weather conditions. Therefore, the lack of an operative speedometer may have contributed to the accident. The Safety Board believes that GVL should make certain that all commercial vehicles are equipped with operable speedometers.

Therefore, the National Transportation Safety Board recommends that Graebel Van Lines, Inc.:

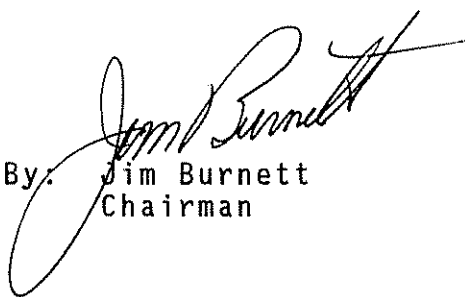
1/ For more detailed information, read Highway Accident Report-- "Tractor-Semitrailer/Intercity Bus Head-on Collision, Interstate 10, Beaumont, Texas, May 4, 1987" (NTSB/HAR-88/01).

Make certain that all vehicles in commercial operation have operative speedometers. (Class II, Priority Action) (H-88-6)

Also, the Safety Board issued Safety Recommendations H-88-1 and -2 to the Federal Highway Administration; H-88-3 to bus manufacturers; H-88-4 to the United Bus Owners of America and the American Bus Association; and H-88-5 to the United Bus Owners of America, the American Bus Association, and the American Trucking Associations, Inc.

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 actions taken as a result of its safety recommendations and 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-88-6 in your reply.

BURNETT, Chairman, GOLDMAN, Vice Chairman, and LAUBER, NALL, and KOLSTAD, Members, concurred in this recommendation.

  
By: Jim Burnett  
Chairman