

H-268

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD
WASHINGTON, D.C.

ISSUED: March 24, 1981

Forwarded to:

Mr. William B. Grossman
President
National Tour Brokers Association
120 Kentucky Avenue
Lexington, Kentucky 40502

SAFETY RECOMMENDATION(S)

H-81-16

On June 5, 1980, about 12:47 a.m., a northbound Central Texas Bus Lines, Inc., charter bus, occupied by the driver and 32 passengers, accelerated out of control while descending a long, curved, steep grade on State Route 7 about 1 mile south of Jasper, Arkansas. The bus failed to negotiate a left curve and ran off the right pavement edge into a drainage channel. The bus continued for 280 feet, impacted the berm at a concrete culvert, was redirected across the highway, and vaulted down a steep embankment. Twenty bus occupants, including the driver, were killed and 13 passengers were injured. ^{1/}

The bus had departed its domiciled terminal in Dallas, Texas, about 7:05 a.m., on June 4, 1980, en route to Branson, Missouri, with a charter group of 32 persons, primarily senior citizens. Between noon and 12:30 p.m., the fuel pump failed, and the bus was stopped at the roadside about 15 miles outside Talihina, Oklahoma. Because a standard replacement fuel pump was not available locally, the Vice President and General Manager of Central Texas Bus Lines at the company headquarters in Waco, Texas, reportedly authorized the installation of a nonstandard fuel pump and allowed the bus to continue to Branson where a standard pump was to be installed. The nonstandard pump was installed and the trip was resumed, after a delay of 4 to 4.5 hours.

About 7 p.m., the bus stopped at the Queen Wilhelmina Campground near Mena, Arkansas, for dinner. The busdriver and a number of passengers wanted to spend the night at the campground, but the tour director decided to continue to Branson where the group had confirmed motel reservations. The bus departed the campground at about 8:25 p.m.

The day the charter trip began was the busdriver's eighth consecutive day on duty. He had previously logged 63.4 on-duty hours. Branson was more than 500 miles from Dallas. There was no way he could have made the trip in the 10-hour driving time authorized by Federal Motor Carrier Safety Regulation (FMCSR) 395.3, Driver Hours of Duty, much less in the 6.6 hours available until he exceeded the 70 hours authorized

^{1/} For more detailed information read "Central Texas Bus Lines, Inc., Charter Bus, State Route 7, near Jasper, Arkansas, June 5, 1980" (NTSB-HAR-81-1).

for 8 consecutive days on duty. Furthermore, FMCSR 392.6, Schedules to Conform with Speed Limits, states that "no motor carrier shall schedule a run or permit or require the operation of any motor vehicle between points in such a period of time as would necessitate the vehicle being operated at speeds greater than those prescribed by the jurisdiction in or through which the vehicle is being operated." Since the adoption of the national speed limit of 55 mph, the Bureau of Motor Carrier Safety of the Federal Highway Administration has interpreted this to set a limitation of about 450 miles per day. Both the dispatcher and the busdriver should have known that the busdriver could not complete his trip within the legal hours available. The busdriver should not have been dispatched for this 544-mile trip.

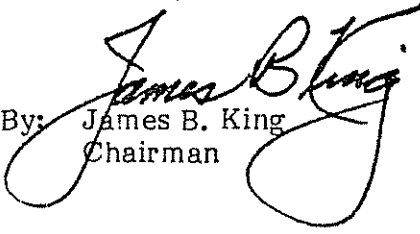
When the tour group stopped for dinner at 7 p.m., the busdriver, realizing that he was already in excess of his total hours on duty and that he could not reach Branson before being in excess of his 15 hours on duty and 10 hours driving time, should have refused to continue to Branson. If the tour group had remained overnight as the busdriver and some passengers wanted, the busdriver would have been refreshed and would have traversed the steep winding hills in the daylight on the following day. This may have prevented the accident.

The management decision to replace the fuel pump with a nonstandard fuel pump and for the bus to continue to its destination was ill-advised because it was made without all of the facts being considered. The bus was domiciled and chartered out of Dallas, but the Vice President and General Manager making the decision was headquartered in Waco. He was not aware of the driver's hours of service limitations nor did he know the route the bus was going to follow to reach its destination. Both the Vice President and General Manager and the busdriver either neglected to consider or ignored the impact the delay caused by the repairs would have on the busdriver's already extended hours on duty and the adverse effect the long hours on the road before reaching the destination would have on the busdriver's physical alertness and driving ability. At the time the bus broke down, the busdriver had already been on duty 5 1/2 hours and driving for 5 hours. He had only 1 hour available to complete his 70-hour aggregate time on duty for an 8-day period and 5 hours to complete the 10-hour driving limitation as established by the FMCSR's. By the time the repairs were completed, the busdriver had been on duty 10 hours. Seven hours later, he was still on duty and driving when the accident occurred.

Therefore, the National Transportation Safety Board recommends that the National Tour Brokers Association:

Inform member tour brokers of the particulars of this accident and encourage them in their contract negotiations with passenger carriers who have Interstate Commerce Commission operating authority to emphasize the importance of the carrier's compliance with all safety regulations. (Class II, Priority Action) (H-81-16)

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

By:  James B. King
Chairman