

Log H-4800



# National Transportation Safety Board

Washington, D.C. 20594

## Safety Recommendation

**Date:** September 16, 1986

**In reply refer to:** H-86-71

Governors of the States of  
Alaska, Florida, New Mexico, Texas,  
and Wyoming

About 7:51 p.m. on June 21, 1985, a privately-owned, 70,000-pound tractor-semitrailer operating in interstate commerce under a trip-lease agreement with C. Maxwell Trucking Company, Inc., lost control while descending a steep 3,439-foot grade on southbound State Route 59 in downtown Van Buren, Arkansas. The truck collided with the rear of and overrode a station wagon which was stopped at the bottom of the hill. The truck and the station wagon continued 84 feet forward, across an intersection, up a curb, and through a guardrail. They then traveled another 22 feet and struck two commercial buildings. A fire ensued and engulfed both vehicles and three buildings. Both occupants in the truck and the seven occupants in the station wagon were fatally injured. 1/

Dealing effectively with drivers who violate motor carrier safety regulations and traffic laws is an ever-increasing problem as is evident from the 18 percent increase in commercial truck accidents since 1982. 2/ Uniformed police officers are trained to enforce Rules of the Road violations, and only a limited number of officers have received advanced training as motor carrier safety inspectors.

The Bureau of Motor Carrier Safety (BMCS) is attempting to address the problem of an insufficient number of Federal inspectors to conduct field safety inspections on commercial vehicles through its Motor Carrier Safety Assistance Program (MCSAP). The objective of the program is to improve the safe operation of commercial vehicles by encouraging States to develop programs for conducting vehicle/driver roadside safety inspections and by training State enforcement personnel to perform effective safety inspections. The MCSAP permits State, county, and local motor carrier safety inspectors to enforce safety regulations on both interstate and intrastate vehicles. Under the provisions of the program, the BMCS provides participating States with grant funding and training support. Currently, 47 States and territories participating in the program have adopted Federal Motor Carrier Safety Regulations or enforce similar State statutes for commercial vehicles and drivers.

During 1985, the first full year of the MCSAP, 1,500 State and local motor carrier safety specialists were trained, an estimated 300,000 roadside safety inspections were

1/ For more detailed information, read Highway Accident Report—"Tractor-Semitrailer/Station Wagon Runaway, Collision, and Fire, Van Buren, Arkansas, June 21, 1985" (NTSB/HAR-86/03).

2/ Insurance Institute for Highway Safety, "Big Trucks and Highway Safety" 1985.

conducted, 30,000 drivers were inspected for proper qualifications, and 100,000 unsafe vehicles were removed from service. This program already has greatly extended BMCS's capabilities for enforcing motor carrier safety regulations.

Preliminary data collected in 1986 by the Safety Board indicates that MCSAP has made significant progress. Seventeen million dollars have been allocated for training and implementation of the program. About 1,600,000 roadside inspections have been conducted, and all relevant inspection and driver data will be entered into the BMCS data base for future use by all participating States. Currently, two studies have been funded to analyze the data for driver-related problems. The State of Montana's use of an abbreviated inspection form to check vehicle equipment permits its inspectors to concentrate more on identifying driver-related problems. In Nevada a new on-line computer system will aid inspectors by providing them with driver violation information. Presently the system is used to check States surrounding Nevada. However, the system has the capability of checking all State drivers files.

Enforcement personnel must be trained to identify each of the numerous potential safety violations and must be trained to properly enforce these violations. The Safety Board believes that MCSAP provides great potential for improving the safety of commercial transportation throughout this nation and urges each State to participate to the fullest in this program. The States of Alaska, Florida, New Mexico, Texas, and Wyoming currently are the only States not involved in the MCSAP, and the Safety Board urges these States to participate in the MCSAP. The Safety Board believes that through the training, support, and direction of the MCSAP these States, as well as the rest of the nation, will benefit from the improved safety of commercial vehicle operations and resultant reduction in the number of accidents.

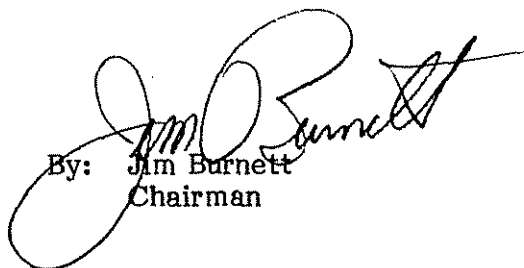
Therefore, as a result of its investigation, the National Transportation Safety Board recommends that the States of Alaska, Florida, New Mexico, Texas, and Wyoming:

Actively participate in the Bureau of Motor Carrier Safety's Motor Carrier Safety Assistance Program. (Class II, Priority Action) (H-86-71)

Also, the Safety Board made Safety Recommendations H-86-65 through -67 to the Bureau of Motor Carrier Safety, H-86-68 and -69 to the Federal Highway Administration, and H-86-70 to the Arkansas State Highway and Transportation Department.

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-86-71 in your reply.

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

By:  Burnett  
Chairman

Honorable Bill Sheffield  
Governor of Alaska  
Juneau, Alaska 99811

Honorable Robert Graham  
Governor of Florida  
Tallahassee, Florida 32301

Honorable Toney Anaya  
Governor of New Mexico  
Santa Fe, New Mexico 87503

Honorable Mark White  
Governor of Texas  
Austin, Texas 78711

Honorable Ed Herschler  
Governor of Wyoming  
Cheyenne, Wyoming 82002

