

# NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

Washington, D.C. 20594



## Safety Recommendation

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**Date:** February 25, 1994

**In Reply Refer To:** H-94-3

Mr. Thomas Donohue  
President  
American Trucking Associations, Inc.  
2200 Mill Road  
Alexandria, Virginia 22314

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About 3:13 p.m., Wednesday, March 17, 1993, an Amerada Hess (Hess) tractor-semitrailer hauling gasoline was struck by National Railroad Passenger Corporation (Amtrak) train 91. The truckdriver was attempting to cross a railroad/highway grade crossing on Cypress Creek Road in Fort Lauderdale, Florida. Traffic in the area of the crossing was congested because the left and center lanes were closed just over the crossing. Traffic was being channeled into the right lane and later shifted into a right-turn lane. The truck, which was loaded with 8,500 gallons of gasoline, was punctured when it was struck. A fire erupted, engulfing the truck and nine other vehicles. The fire killed the truckdriver and five occupants of three stopped vehicles.<sup>1</sup>

The National Transportation Safety Board determines that the probable cause of the accident was the inadequacy of the precautions taken by the Broward County project manager, the design engineer, and the contractor, which resulted in traffic congestion at the railroad/highway grade crossing, and the truckdriver's decision to cross the railroad track even though the warning system had been activated

Hess is a member of the American Trucking Associations (ATA), and although the ATA acknowledged that its members receive literature periodically about railroad/highway grade crossing safety, a Hess representative indicated that the railroad/grade crossing safety information available to its drivers was from the commercial driver license manual. Operation

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<sup>1</sup>For more detailed information, read Highway Accident Report--Gasoline Tank Truck/Amtrak Train Collision and Fire in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, March 17, 1993 (NTSB/HAR-94/1).

Lifesaver, Inc.,<sup>2</sup> (OLI) has provided a copy of its video to the ATA so that the ATA can include it among the video selections it makes available to its members. The OLI indicated to the Safety Board that the ATA has asked it to provide programs that may improve the performance of professional drivers at grade crossings. The Safety Board believes that the ATA should alert its members specifically to the potential dangers involved in approaching work zone areas that are adjacent to railroad/highway grade crossings. Further, the Safety Board believes that Hess should develop and implement a grade crossing awareness training program, including participation in the OLI program, to instruct truckdrivers in the potential dangers at railroad/highway grade crossings.

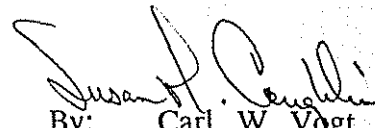
Therefore, the National Transportation Safety Board makes the following safety recommendation to the American Trucking Associations, Inc.:

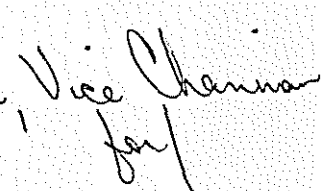
As part of your safety program, notify your members of the circumstances of this accident and alert them to the potential dangers when approaching work zone areas adjacent to railroad/highway grade crossings. (Class II, Priority Action) (H-94-3)

Also, the Safety Board issued Safety Recommendations H-94-1 and -2 to the Federal Highway Administration; and H-94-4 to the Amerada Hess Corporation. If you need additional information, you may call (202) 382-0672.

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-94-3 in your reply.

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

  
 By: Carl W. Vogt  
 Chairman

  
 Vice Chairman  
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<sup>2</sup>An active, continuous public information and education program to help prevent and reduce the number of crashes, injuries and fatalities and improve driver performance at the nation's 300,000 public and private railroad/highway grade crossings. Each State has an Operation Lifesaver program coordinator.