

H-05744

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

Washington, D.C. 20594

Safety Recommendation



Date: February 25, 1994

In Reply Refer To: H-94-4

Mr. Robert F. Wright
President
Amerada Hess Corporation
1185 Avenue of the Americas
New York, New York 10036

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.¹

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

In January 1987, the Safety Board issued Safety Recommendation R-86-60 to Operation Lifesaver, Inc.² (OLI), asking it to expand its program to deal specifically with the problems of

¹For 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).

²An 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.

trucks carrying bulk hazardous materials, especially petroleum products, over grade crossings. In response, the OLI has accomplished the following:

- o Developed a new section in its trainer textbook that deals specifically with training professional drivers.
- o Distributed to the States 200,000 copies of its professional-driver brochure, "Working Together for Safety."
- o Given speeches to numerous trucking companies and provided written educational material for many other companies.
- o Developed a video, "Physics 101," to distribute to companies for group presentations.

The OLI also responded that it is "aware of the seriousness of the problem and will continue to pursue avenues with which [it] can deliver the OLI message to commercial drivers." The OLI anticipates a significant outreach to the trucking population in 1994. The Safety Board has classified this recommendation as "Closed--Acceptable Action," based on the response provided by the OLI.

The Safety Board is aware that Hess conducts monthly 2-hour-long in-service training sessions for its drivers. However, Hess does not have a grade crossing safety program, and carrier representatives are not familiar with the OLI program. After the accident, a Hess representative stated that the company has changed its procedures and now shows its truckdrivers a videotape dealing with safety regulations, statutes, and procedures governing railroad/highway grade crossings.

The Safety Board is also aware that 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. The 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 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.

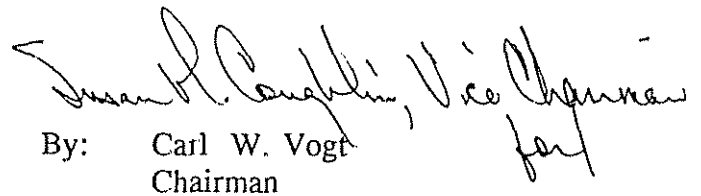
Therefore, the National Transportation Safety Board makes the following safety recommendation to the Amerada Hess Corporation:

Develop and implement a grade crossing awareness training program, including participation in the Operation Lifesaver Program, to instruct your truckdrivers in the potential dangers at railroad/highway grade crossings. (Class II, Priority Action) (H-94-4).

Also, the Safety Board issued Safety Recommendations H-94-1 and -2 to the Federal Highway Administration, and H-94-3 to the American Trucking Associations, Inc. 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-94-4 in your reply.

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

 Susan H. Coughlin, Vice Chairman
for

By: Carl W. Vogt
Chairman