



National Transportation Safety Board

Washington, D.C. 20594

Safety Recommendation

Log H-595F

S&H

Date: August 5, 1998

In reply refer to: H-98-26

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About 5:52 a.m. on February 12, 1997, a doubles truck with empty trailers, operated by Consolidated Freightways, Inc., that was traveling northbound on U.S. Route 41, a four-lane divided limited access highway, near Slinger, Wisconsin, lost control and crossed over the 50-foot depressed median into the southbound lanes. A flatbed truck loaded with lumber, operated by McFaul Transport, Inc., that was traveling southbound on U.S. Route 41 collided with the doubles truck, lost control, and crossed over the median into the northbound lanes. A northbound passenger van with nine adult occupants struck and underrode the right front side of the flatbed truck at the landing gear. A refrigerator truck loaded with produce, operated by Glandt/Dahlke, Inc., that was also traveling northbound, struck the right rear side of the flatbed truck. Although it had snowed from about 8 p.m. to 3 a.m. the night before, it was clear at the time of the accident. Other motorists and the emergency responders to the accident scene reported icy patches in the roadway. Eight of the nine van occupants suffered fatal injuries, and the remaining occupant suffered serious injuries. Two of the three commercial truckdrivers were treated for minor injuries and released; the third refused treatment.¹

¹For further information, read Highway Accident Report—*Multiple Vehicle Crossover Accident, Slinger, Wisconsin, February 12, 1997* (NTSB/HAR-98/01).

One issue raised by this accident concerned on-board event recorders. On-board recorders are used for accident investigation and reconstruction and, by the trucking industry, as management tools for carrying out speed control and incentive systems for drivers. Although the Slinger doubles truck had an electronic control module, it did not have on-board recording devices, which are optional. Consequently, the truck's actual speed at the time of the collision was not readily available.

"Automatic information recording devices" is a safety issue on the Safety Board's "Most Wanted" list. The Safety Board considers that adequate on-board recording devices are necessary in all modes of transportation because information from them can be used to identify safety trends, develop corrective actions, and conduct more efficient accident investigations. Cockpit voice recorders and flight data recorders, or black boxes, have been on commercial airliners for years. Since 1993, event recorders have also been required on trains. Through Safety Recommendations R-96-46 and -47, the Safety Board recommended that the Federal Transit Administration and the American Public Transit Administration develop guidelines for event monitoring/recording devices for rapid transit cars and urge transit agencies to install such devices on new and rehabilitated cars. Regarding marine transportation, the Safety Board has for more than 20 years recommended the use of voyage event recorders for marine accident reconstruction.

The Safety Board has also made recommendations regarding recorders for highway trucking transport. Although the recommendation was primarily aimed at reducing fatigue-related accidents, in 1990,² the Safety Board issued Safety Recommendation H-90-28 to the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA):

H-90-28

Require automated/tamper-proof on-board recording devices, such as tachographs or computerized logs, to identify commercial truckdrivers who exceed hours-of-service regulations.

The Safety Board reiterated Safety Recommendation H-90-28 in its 1995 study on truckdriver fatigue,³ explaining that the intent of the recommendation was to provide a tamper-proof mechanism that could be used to enforce the hours-of-service regulations, rather than relying on drivers' handwritten logs. In a February 1997 response, the FHWA acknowledged that on-board recording devices will eventually be an important tool for monitoring the hours of service of commercial motor vehicle drivers. However, the FHWA stated that "the FHWA position is that the benefits and practicality of on-board recorders must be firmly established before rulemaking ensues." The current status of Safety Recommendation H-90-28 is "Open--Unacceptable Action."

Therefore, the National Transportation Safety Board makes the following safety recommendation to the Independent Truckers and Drivers Association, the National Private Truck Council, and the Owner-Operators Independent Drivers Association, Inc:

²Safety Study—*Fatigue, Alcohol, Other Drugs, and Medical Factors in Fatal-to-the-Driver Heavy Truck Crashes* (NTSB/SS-90/01)

³Safety Study—*Factors That Affect Fatigue in Heavy Truck Accidents* (NTSB/SS-95/01).

Advise your members to equip their commercial vehicle fleets with automated and tamper-proof on-board recording devices, such as tachometers or computerized recorders, to identify information concerning both driver and vehicle operating characteristics. (H-98-26)

Also, the Safety Board issued Safety Recommendations H-98-8 through -13 to the Federal Highway Administration; H-98-14 through -17 to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration; H-98-18 to the National Association of Governors' Highway Safety Representatives; H-98-19 through -23 to the American Trucking Associations, the Motor Freight Carrier Association, and the International Brotherhood of Teamsters; H-98-24 to the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials; and H-98-25 to the Wisconsin Department of Transportation.

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-98-26 in your reply. If you need additional information, you may call (202) 314-6484.

Chairman HALL, Vice Chairman FRANCIS, and Members HAMMERSCHMIDT, GOGLIA, and BLACK concurred in this recommendation.

By: 
Jim Hall
Chairman