NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD
WASHINGTON, D.C.

ISSUED: September 29, 1978

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Forwarded to:

  Honorable Karl Bowers
  Administrator                              SAFETY RECOMMENDATION(S)
  Federal Highway Administration
  Washington, D.C.  20590                      H-78-69

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About 10:00 a.m., on January 25, 1978, a Kohler Company tractor-semitrailer, carrying a 43,000-lb cargo, was southbound on North Carolina Route 226 and descending a steep grade when braking capability was lost because the brakes were out of adjustment. The operator steered the tractor-semitrailer into the northbound lanes at a blind curve and struck a northbound pickup truck headon. A passenger in the pickup truck was killed; both drivers and a second passenger in the pickup were injured. 1/
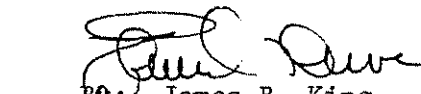
Highway barrier design and road surface conditions were not causal to this accident. However, the height of the single W-beam guardrail at the accident site varied from 1 foot to 2 feet above the road and did not meet the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) recommended minimum height of 27 inches. The low points of the existing rail, which are at the center section of the curve, offer little retention protection to an intruding vehicle. Evidently, the road was resurfaced without upgrading the guardrail.

Accordingly, the National Transportation Safety Board recommends that the Federal Highway Administration:

1/ For more detailed information read "Kohler Company Tractor-Semitrailer/ Pickup Truck Collision, U.S. Route 226, Near Marion, North Carolina, January 25, 1978." The report will be available after October 15, 1978.

2478

Review North Carolina's barrier rail installation practices
to assure that guardrails are upgraded when roadway resurfacing
alters their relative height to the extent that they no longer
conform to the American Association of State Highway and
Transportation Officials (AASHTO) standards. (Class II, Priority
Action) (H-78-69)

KING, Chairman, McADAMS, HOGUE, and DRIVER, Members, concurred in
the above recommendation.

BY: James B. King
      Chairman