

RUSTBURG

9 Recs

Log H-738

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD  
WASHINGTON, D.C.

ISSUED: March 8, 1978

Forwarded to:

Mr. Henry W. Tulloch  
President  
Virginia State Board of  
Education  
803 Oak Avenue  
Waynesboro, Virginia 22980

SAFETY RECOMMENDATION(S)

H-78-6 and 7

About 7:35 a.m., e.s.t., on March 8, 1977, the driver of a Campbell County (Virginia) Public Schools schoolbus started her regular route to pick up students. She had driven about 3.5 miles and had made about eight stops before stopping to pick up other passengers south of Brown's Store on U.S. Highway 29, near Rustburg, Virginia. On leaving Brown's she had 32 passengers on the bus. The busdriver left the stop and traveled to the next stop approximately 980 feet south at about 25 mph. The busdriver stated that she did not see any southbound traffic ahead of or behind her between the stops. About 200 feet from the next stop she started to decelerate, and activated the schoolbus flasher lights. She stopped the bus in the right lane, close to the right edge of the roadway. Just as she opened the door, the bus was struck from the rear by a tractor-semitrailer. 1/

There were no obstructions or traffic within the highway right-of-way that would have obscured the truckdriver's view of the schoolbus as it preceded him from its stop at Brown's Store to the next stop. Likewise the schoolbus driver's view of the overtaking tractor-semitrailer in the rearview mirrors of the bus was not obscured by roadside obstacles or other traffic from the time she departed the Brown's Store stop.

Three of the 33 occupants of the schoolbus died as a result of the collision. One of the fatalities was ejected and pinned under the overturned bus. The schoolbus driver sustained head, arm, and leg

1/ For more detailed information read "Highway Accident Report: Tractor-semitrailer/Schoolbus Collision and Overturn, Rustburg, Virginia, March 8, 1977" (NTSB-HAR-78-1).

injuries and multiple abrasions and contusions. Twenty-five of the 29 other bus occupants received minor to serious injuries. The truckdriver sustained chest and abdominal injuries as well as multiple abrasions and contusions.

The schoolbus driver had a valid Virginia operator's license, restricted to corrective lenses with a Class S endorsement that authorized her to operate a schoolbus. She was operating under contract as a schoolbus driver for the Campbell County School Board and had been so employed since September 1963.

According to Virginia State Board of Education Regulations, it is standard operating procedure for schoolbuses to stop to pick up and discharge passengers in the right lane of traffic, provided that the bus can be seen from a safe distance. This operation exposes the bus and its occupants to a high level of hazard. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration recognized this hazard during the development of Federal Highway Safety Program Standard No. 17, "Pupil Transportation Safety," which states, in part:

"Each State shall develop plans for minimizing highway use hazards to school vehicle occupants, other highway users... including but not limited to...providing loading and unloading zones off the main traveled part of the highway, wherever it is practicable to do so...."

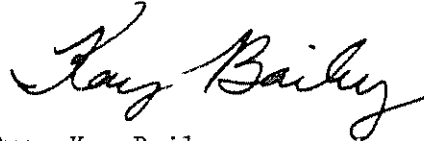
The Virginia procedure as defined by its regulation does not comply with this aspect of the standard.

Therefore, the National Transportation Safety Board recommends that the Virginia State Board of Education:

Revise its schoolbus operating regulations to eliminate the procedural requirement for the stopping of schoolbuses on the main portion of a roadway when picking up or discharging passengers, and add a requirement that conforms with Highway Safety Program Standard No. 17 which calls for loading and unloading zones off the main traveled portion of the highway wherever practicable. (Class II, Priority Action) (H-78-6)

Revise its Schoolbus Driver Training Program to place greater emphasis on defensive driving procedures as they relate to observing surrounding traffic before stopping to pick up or discharge passengers. (Class II, Priority Action) (H-78-7)

BAILEY, Acting Chairman, McADAMS, HOGUE and KING, Members, concurred in the above recommendations.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Kay Bailey".

By: Kay Bailey  
Acting Chairman

