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NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD
WASHINGTON, D.C.

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(202) 426-8787

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Forwarded to:

Honorable James B. Gregory
Administrator
National Highway Traffic Safety
Administration
Washington, D. C. 20590

SAFETY RECOMMENDATION(S)

H-75-32 through H-75-36

On February 28, 1975, at 7:40 a.m., P.d.t., the first of a series of multiple-vehicle collisions occurred on State Route 91 near Corona, California. The collisions occurred in fog. Eighty-four vehicles were involved and 23 persons were injured.

The Safety Board's investigation revealed that many drivers did not know what they should do to avoid becoming involved in a collision. The investigation also revealed that the drivers did not know what they should do when they became involved in a collision, i.e., if they should leave their vehicles or remain in them.

At the time of the accidents, the California Highway Patrol had started to escort some of the vehicles through the fog. The speeds in the convoy vehicles were lower and more constant than the speeds of those vehicles not in the convoy. Because of the higher and more varied speeds of the vehicles not in the convoy, they became involved in more severe accidents.

The convoy procedure was implemented by the California Highway Patrol in November 1970. It consists of an escort service to motorists who encounter fog on selected highways.

There may be other State police agencies that also use a convoy or similar procedure that could prevent or reduce the severity of collisions in fog. All such procedures should be studied and the most effective should be compiled into a manual for use by police agencies in areas that have problems with fog.

The findings of this accident pertain to three areas of interest to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA): driver education, highway-police department procedures, and vehicle lighting. The Safety Board has made previous recommendations to the NHTSA in the first two areas.

In the area of driver education, the National Transportation Safety Board has recommended that the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration:

1. Assume a leadership role with driver educators to resolve the conflicting information which is being taught relative to driving tactics in fog. (Recommendation H-72-51)
2. Modify the Driver Education Standard (Standard No. 4) to include more definitive information relative to reduced-visibility driving. (Recommendation H-72-52)
3. Recommend to driver education instructors the need to stress in the teaching of drivers that there is no single solution to the highway fog problem and point out the need to avoid or discontinue highway use until conditions warrant safe travel. (Recommendation H-72-53)

These recommendations were made to the NHTSA in a Special Study ^{1/}; recommendation No. 2 was repeated in a recent Board report. ^{2/}

The NHTSA appears to have had difficulty in implementing the recommendations for several reasons: (a) The lack of a study of accident statistics revealing the magnitude of the reduced visibility problem; (b) there is no consensus among driver educators as to what should be taught about driving in fog; (c) research which has already been done has produced conflicting results; and (d) evaluations of what is being taught now relative to driving in fog have not been successful.

The Safety Board recognizes that before the NHTSA can implement recommendation H-72-52, the conflicting information being taught relative to driving in fog (recommendation H-72-51) must be resolved and additional data must be gathered.

Therefore, the National Transportation Safety Board recommends that the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration:

1. Sample motor vehicle accident reports from States to determine the percentage of fatal and injury-producing accidents which have occurred under reduced visibility conditions. (Recommendation H-75-32) (Class II, Priority Followup)
2. Review its multidisciplinary accident investigation files to identify the factors involved in reduced visibility conditions. (Recommendation H-75-33) (Class II, Priority Followup)

^{1/} National Transportation Safety Board, "Special Study: Reduced Visibility (Fog) Accidents on Limited Access Highways, 1972."

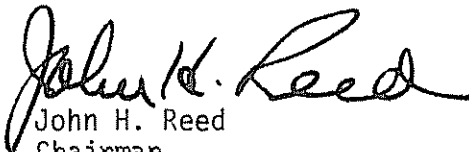
^{2/} National Transportation Safety Board, "Series of Multivehicle Collisions and Fires Under Limited Visibility Conditions, New Jersey Turnpike, Gate 15, and U.S. Route 46, October 23 and 24, 1973."

3. Conduct a formal survey of driver educators to determine what is and what should be taught about driving under reduced visibility conditions and issue such guidelines for driver education courses. (Recommendation H-75-34) (Class II, Priority Followup)

In addition, the National Transportation Safety Board also recommends that the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration:

4. Revise FMVSS 108 to require that all new vehicles be equipped with a set of brake and turn lights mounted high enough above the pavement so a driver could see the lights of at least the two vehicles directly ahead. (Recommendation H-75-35) (Class II, Priority Followup)
5. (a) Survey those police agencies that employ convoy or escort procedures; (b) select from the procedures those that have proven to be most effective; (c) analyze the procedures and develop recommendations to assure maximum effectiveness of patrol procedures; and (d) compile and issue an operations manual that can be implemented by the States through Highway Safety Program Standard No. 15, "Police Traffic Services." (Recommendation H-75-36) (Class II, Priority Followup)

REED, Chairman, McADAMS, THAYER, BURGESS, and HALEY, Members, concurred in the above recommendations.


By: John H. Reed
Chairman

THESE RECOMMENDATIONS WILL BE RELEASED TO THE PUBLIC ON THE ISSUE DATE SHOWN ABOVE. NO PUBLIC DISSEMINATION OF THIS DOCUMENT SHOULD BE MADE PRIOR TO THAT DATE.

