



## National Transportation Safety Board

Washington, D. C. 20594

### Safety Recommendation

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Date: June 20, 1991

In reply refer to: H-91-26

Mr. Robert P. Farrell, President  
National Automobile Transporter's Association  
535 Griswold Street  
902 Buhl Building  
Detroit, Michigan 48226

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About 5:40 p.m. on July 26, 1990, a truck operated by Double B Auto Sales, Inc., transporting eight automobiles entered a highway work zone near Sutton, West Virginia, on northbound Interstate Highway 79 and struck the rear of a utility trailer being towed by a Dodge Aspen. The Aspen then struck the rear of a Plymouth Colt, and the Double B truck and the two automobiles traveled into the closed right lane and collided with three West Virginia Department of Transportation (WVDOT) maintenance vehicles.

Fire ensued, and the eight occupants in the Aspen and the Colt died. The Aspen, Colt, Double B truck, and two of the three WVDOT vehicles were either destroyed or severely damaged. The Double B truckdriver and one firefighter sustained minor injuries.<sup>1</sup>

Although the Double B truckdriver reported he checked the tiedowns the morning of the accident, several autos in the load were not secured using all available tiedown points. The Safety Board believes that the tiedown chain found attached to the left front of the Lincoln was from the right rear of the ramp, where a chain was missing after the accident, indicating that the Lincoln was being transported facing rearward before the collision.

The hook provided for linking the chain to the ratchet shaft at this location was bent up and away from the shaft. Consequently, the Safety Board concludes that the Double B truckdriver used an insufficient amount of chain wrap around the right

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<sup>1</sup>For more detailed information, read Highway Accident Report--"Multiple Vehicle Collision and Fire in a Work Zone on Interstate Highway 79 near Sutton, West Virginia, July 26, 1990" (NTSB/HAR-91/01)

rear head ramp ratchet shaft to prevent the chain from bending the shaft hook and separating from the shaft during the collision.

In addition, the deformation of the tiedown bracket at the right rear of the Lincoln and the lack of such deformation or marking at the right front tiedown slot and left rear tiedown bracket lead the Safety Board to conclude that in addition to the inadequate tiedown at the right rear of the head ramp, the only other point securing the Lincoln to the transport was at the left front of the head ramp. Only two of four available tiedown points were used, and only one of those was used properly.

Examination of the vehicles that remained secured to the transporter indicated that although four tiedown points were provided, only three tiedowns were used on three of the vehicles. The fact that the other vehicles being transported remained secured to the transporter even though only three tiedowns were used in three cases leads the Safety Board to conclude that had the Double B truckdriver properly used all available tiedowns on the Lincoln being transported on the head ramp, the Lincoln may not have broken away from its restraints.

If the Lincoln on the head ramp had been properly restrained, the roof of the Aspen would not have been crushed, and one or more of the occupants of the Aspen may have survived by escaping or being extricated by rescuers from the windows or door on the left side of that vehicle.

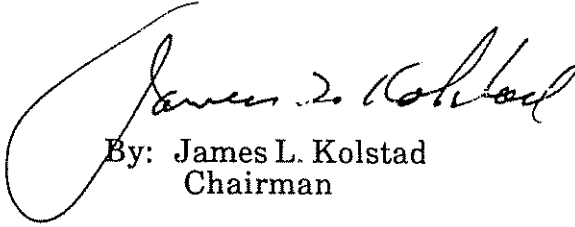
Therefore, the National Transportation Safety Board recommends that the National Automobile Transporter's Association:

Advise your members of the facts and circumstances of the multiple vehicle collision and fire that occurred near Sutton, West Virginia, on July 26, 1990, and request your members to remind their drivers to use all available tiedown devices when securing vehicles to the transporter. (Class II, Priority Action)(H-91-26)

Also, the Safety Board issued Safety Recommendations H-91-14 to the Double B Auto Sales, Inc.; H-91-15 through -21 to the West Virginia Department of Transportation; H-91-22 through -25 to the State of New York; and H-91-27 through -31 to the Federal Highway Administration.

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-91-26 in your reply.

KOLSTAD, Chairman, COUGHLIN, Vice Chairman, LAUBER, BURNETT,  
and HART, Members, concurred in this recommendation.



By: James L. Kolstad  
Chairman