

Log 17-124

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD
WASHINGTON, D.C.

ISSUED: August 1, 1978

Forwarded to:

Honorable Joan Claybrook
Administrator
National Highway Traffic Safety
Administration
400 7th Street, SW.
Washington, D.C. 20590

SAFETY RECOMMENDATION(S)

H-78-53 and 54

About 2:19 p.m. on July 21, 1977, a dump truck loaded with 17 tons of stone was eastbound on U.S. Route 50 near Chantilly, Virginia, when it violated a red traffic signal at an intersection and struck a northbound automobile on Virginia Route 28. The automobile's four occupants were killed.

The 18-year-old truckdriver had been issued a chauffeur's license and a "Class A" endorsement 5 weeks before the accident. With this license and endorsement he is allowed to drive for an employer in intrastate commerce and to drive a vehicle with three or more axles with an actual weight of more than 40,000 pounds. The loaded dump truck was in this category. Virginia law allows persons to drive such vehicles if they are 16 years old or older, possess an operator's license, and obtain a Class A endorsement. To drive for hire or an employer, one must be at least 18 years old, possess a chauffeur's license, and have the Class A endorsement. To obtain the Class A endorsement, the applicant must take a road test in the type of vehicle he will drive, or submit a statement in the application that he has driven at least 500 miles in the type of vehicle he expects to drive. This truckdriver had not taken a road test for the Class A endorsement; he had signed a statement in his application that he had driven such a vehicle at least 500 miles. Virginia, as well as many other States, do not require a performance test in the type of vehicle for which the person is being licensed.

The Safety Board believes that a road performance test in the type of vehicle for which one is being licensed to drive should be a mandatory requirement by all States. The need for a road test as part of a model classified driver licensing system is expressed in Highway Safety Program Manual No. 5 and has been reiterated in a recent National Highway Traffic Safety Administration study, "Development of Uniform Guidelines," prepared by the American Association of Motor Vehicle Administrators.

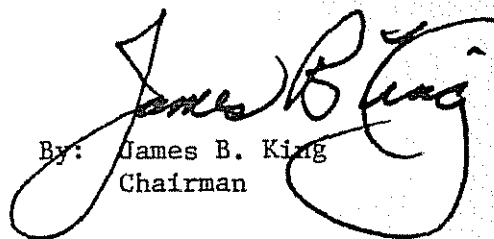
This truckdriver is prohibited from driving trucks in most interstate commerce operations because Federal Motor Carrier Safety Regulations require interstate truckdrivers to be at least 21 years old. This age requirement is based, in part, on available statistics and psychological data relevant to drivers under 21. ^{1/} However, the available accident statistics do not positively correlate the age of truckdrivers to accidents, or give vehicle miles traveled or type of vehicles. Such data are necessary so that relevant minimum driving ages can be established for truckdrivers.

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

Actively encourage and aid the States to adopt a driver licensing system which conforms with the Model Classified Driver Licensing System developed by the American Association of Motor Vehicle Administrators. (Class II, Priority Action) (H-78-53)

Conduct research to establish the relationship between accident exposure rates, types of trucks, and the ages of truckdrivers. (Class II, Priority Action) (H-78-54)

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


By: James B. King
Chairman

^{1/} "Minimum Age Requirements of the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Regulations," U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration, April 1975. The report indicates that most drivers under the age of 21 lack the general maturity, skill, and judgment that is necessary in handling commercial motor vehicles.