

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD WASHINGTON, D.C.

ISSUED: December 27, 1978

 Forwarded to:
 Honorable Joan Claybrook
 Administrator
 National Highway Traffic Safety
 Administration
 Washington, D.C. 20590

SAFETY RECOMMENDATION(S)
H-78-76

At 8:25 p.m. on October 2, 1977, westbound Amtrak passenger train No. 57 struck a northbound pickup truck at a railroad/highway grade crossing in Plant City, Florida. The crossing was equipped with red flashing signals, which were operating. The train was traveling at 70 mph in a 79-mph speed zone; the pickup truck was traveling at 50 mph in a 45-mph speed zone. The 10 occupants of the pickup truck died in the crash. None of the traincrew or its 30 passengers was injured. 1/

An autopsy of the driver of the pickup truck disclosed a 0.14 percent blood alcohol level. The Florida traffic code states that a blood alcohol level of 0.10 percent or more is prima facie evidence of driving while under the influence of alcohol.

In 1971, Hillsborough County, Florida, instituted a Federally funded Alcohol Safety Action Program (ASAP), which was phased out in 1976 when the Federal funds were withdrawn. The Alcohol Safety Action Projects (ASAP) were aimed at providing a systematic, community approach to the drunk driver problem. The major aims of the program were to distinguish the "social drinker" from the "problem drinker," then, to educate the "social drinker" and to rehabilitate the "problem drinker." The final evaluation report for the project concluded: "After five years of the ASAP countermeasure activity there has been a significant decline in the proportions of drunk drivers on the road and the decline had not

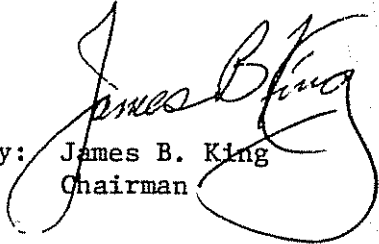
1/ For more detailed information read: "Railroad/Highway Accident Report: Seaboard Coast Line/Amtrak Passenger Train/Pickup Truck Collision, Plant City, Florida, October 2, 1977" (NTSB-RHR-78-2).

had a noticeable effect on A/R (alcohol related) accidents." 2/ There is considerable controversy concerning the effectiveness of the ASAP, and no final evaluation has been published by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.

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

Evaluate and report to the Safety Board those alcohol countermeasures that the NHTSA found to be practical and effective for the reduction in the number of alcohol-involved drivers. (Class II, Priority Action) (H-78-76)

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


By: James B. King
Chairman

2/ Westra and Reis, "An Analysis of Total Project Impact (Tampa ASAP) 1976 - Final Report," University of Southern Florida, Tampa, Florida, 1977, (DOT HS-062-1-080).