

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD  
WASHINGTON, D.C.

ISSUED: March 9, 1978

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Forwarded to:

Mr. Robert W. Townsley  
President  
American Association of Motor  
Vehicle Administrators  
4201 Connecticut Avenue, N. W.  
Washington, D. C. 20008  
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SAFETY RECOMMENDATION(S)

I-78-5

The National Transportation Safety Board conducted a special investigation into selected safeguards against bulk gasoline delivery risks at automotive service stations. This investigation was based on a critical review of a fire and explosion near Gadsden, Alabama, on August 31, 1976, which killed 3 firefighters and injured 28 persons. The Safety Board's findings are reported in its Special Investigation Report, "An Overview of a Bulk Gasoline Delivery Fire and Explosion."

The investigation showed that risks encountered during delivery of gasoline at service stations with aboveground storage tanks can be reduced by inspecting periodically hazardous materials safety equipment on tank vehicles. The safety standards most widely used to prescribe State safety requirements for tank vehicles carrying gasoline within a State are the U. S. Department of Transportation's Hazardous Materials Regulations, 49 CFR 100-178, and the National Fire Protection Association's "Recommended Regulatory Standard for Tank Vehicles for Flammable and Combustible Liquids," NFPA No. 385. Neither standard specifies a program for a State to verify the continuing conformance of the vehicle to the governing safety standards. When vehicles are not built or maintained to State safety standards, risks increase. For example, when nonfusible nuts were substituted for fusible ones on the unloading valve linkage on the tank vehicle at Gadsden, a condition was created which later contributed to the severity of the Gadsden accident. Equally significant, the negation of this safety device remained undetected before the accident. Steps to get hazardous materials safeguards inspected periodically to make sure they conform with State safety codes would reduce such risks.

The Safety Board is aware of only one State, Connecticut, which has established a special periodic inspection program for hazardous materials tank vehicles. Thus, opportunities exist for improving conformance with code requirements at the State level. For example, if an inspection report were required for hazardous materials safety equipment before the operator could obtain a vehicle license, continued conformance over the life of the equipment would be improved.


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HZ M-78-1

Based on its special investigation and findings, the National Transportation Safety Board recommends that the American Association of Motor Vehicle Administrators:

Study ways in which States might assure periodic inspection of required hazardous materials safety equipment on tank vehicles which transport hazardous materials within a single State, and report its findings to the Safety Board within a reasonable time. (Class II, Priority Action)  
(I-78-5)

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



By: Kay Bailey  
Acting Chairman