



National Transportation Safety Board

Washington, D.C. 20594

Safety Recommendation

Date: August 22, 1990

In reply refer to: H-90-81

Dr. W.N. Kerby
Commissioner of Education
Texas Education Agency
1701 North Congress
Austin, TX 78701

About 7:34 a.m., central daylight time, on Thursday, September 21, 1989, a westbound school bus with 81 students operated by the Mission Consolidated Independent School District, Mission, Texas, and a northbound delivery truck operated by the Valley Coca-Cola Bottling Company, McAllen, Texas, collided at Bryan Road and Farm-to-Market Road Number 676 (FM 676) in Alton, Texas. Nineteen students died at the accident scene, and two died later in the hospital. The 21 fatalities were the result of drowning or complications related to the submersion. Furthermore, 3 students sustained serious injuries, 46 others sustained minor injuries, and 11 students were not injured.¹

The school bus was not equipped with a lap shoulder belt for the driver. The Safety Board is unable to determine if this type of restraint system, because of the low speed of the collision, would have prevented the minor injury sustained by the driver. However, the Safety Board believes that lap shoulder seat belts are beneficial to drivers in higher speed accidents, and, therefore, school buses should be equipped with lap shoulder belts at the driver position.

Therefore, the National Transportation Safety Board recommends that the Texas Education Agency:

Coordinate the modification of school bus specifications prepared jointly with the State Purchasing and General Services Administration and the Department of Public

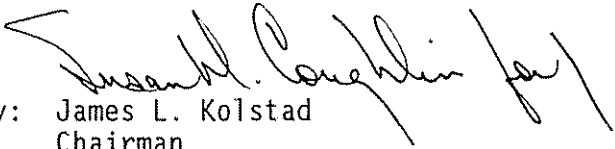
¹For more detailed information, read Highway Accident Report--"Collision between Mission Consolidated Independent School District School Bus and Valley Coca-Cola Bottling Company, Inc., Tractor-Semitrailer, Intersection of Bryan Road and Texas Farm-to-Market Road Number 676, in Alton, Texas, September 21, 1989" (NTSB/HAR-90/02).

Safety, to include a requirement that lap shoulder belt systems for the driver position be installed in all newly manufactured buses including city, intercity, small, and large. (Class II, Priority Action) (H-90-81)

Also, the Safety Board issued Safety Recommendations H-90-74 through -78 and reiterated H-89-5 to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration; H-90-79 through -80 to the Texas Department of Public Safety; H-90-82 through -83 to the Hidalgo County; H-90-84 through -85 to the City of Alton; H-90-86 to the Mission Consolidated Independent School District; H-90-87 to the Coca-Cola Enterprises, Inc.; H-90-88 through -89 to the Valley Coca-Cola Bottling Co., Inc.; and H-90-90 to the National Association of State Directors of Pupil Transportation Services.

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 response from you regarding action taken or contemplated with respect to the recommendation in this letter. Please refer to Safety Recommendation H-90-81 in your reply.

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


By: James L. Kolstad
Chairman