



National Transportation Safety Board

Washington, D.C. 20594

Safety Recommendation

Date: March 17, 1987

In reply refer to: H-87-6

To the Governors of the States of
California, Hawaii, Idaho, Indiana,
Kentucky, Massachusetts, Minnesota,
Mississippi, New York, North Dakota, Ohio,
Oregon, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, Virginia, and
Wyoming, and the Mayor of the District of Columbia

On the afternoon of August 25, 1985, a westbound intercity bus with 17 occupants was traveling on Interstate 70, a four-lane divided highway near Frederick, Maryland. It was cloudy with light rain and the pavement was wet. About 12:40 p.m., as the bus descended a hill with a slight curve to the right, the rear tires of the bus lost traction. The bus moved side to side out of control, crossing both travel lanes and the right paved shoulder, and struck the left side of a reinforced concrete bridge rail over the Monocacy River before coming to rest. Of the 17 occupants onboard, 14 were ejected from the bus during the collision sequence. The busdriver and 5 passengers were fatally injured; 11 other passengers sustained minor to serious injuries. 1/

The Safety Board has investigated four accidents (including this one) in which GMC Model PD-4106 buses have gone out of control on wet pavement. 2/ Although the four bus accidents do not represent the general population of bus accidents, the Safety Board was concerned that these buses appear to have lost rear wheel traction while negotiating shallow curves at highway speeds on marginal to slippery wet surfaces. None of the busdrivers regained control after the initial loss of control. Two of the busdrivers had limited driving experience and operated their buses at speeds too great for the weather conditions.

The Safety Board attempted to obtain data to determine if the GMC Model PD-4106 buses were overrepresented in accidents involving a loss of control on wet pavement. However, the Board was unable to evaluate this issue because of insufficient data. Only limited accident data was available by vehicle identification number (VIN).

1/ For more detailed information, read Highway Accident Report—"Intercity Bus Loss of Control and Collision with Bridge Rail on Interstate 70 Near Frederick, Maryland, August 25, 1985" (NTSB/HAR-86/1).

2/ Special Investigation Report—"Metropolitan Coach Corporation Charter Bus Accident, Bethesda, Maryland, October 11, 1975" (NTSB-HAR-76-6); Highway Accident Report—"East Side Church of Christ Bus Skid and Overturn, U.S. Route 183, Near Luling, Texas, November 16, 1980" (NTSB-HAR-81-4); and Highway Summary Accident/Incident Reports—"Near Ackerly, Texas, July 20, 1985; Eureka Springs, Arkansas, September 13, 1985, and Bramwell, West Virginia, October 13, 1985" (NTSB/HAR-87/01/SUM).

Further, data on vehicle miles traveled, as well as the number of various bus models, were not available to provide a measure of exposure to accidents. Thus, insufficient data precluded the Safety Board from determining whether the GMC Model PD-4106 bus is involved at a greater than expected frequency in loss of control accidents on wet pavement.

Although no conclusions could be reached concerning the representation of GMC Model PD-4106 buses in bus accidents, the survey revealed an important deficiency in the accident reporting system of some States. Sixteen States and the District of Columbia do not collect VIN or enter the VIN data into their accident reporting systems, especially for commercial vehicle accidents.

Highway Safety Program Standards (HSPS) No. 10, Traffic Records, and No. 18, Accident Investigation and Reporting, recommend that the State accident record agencies notify State motor vehicle agencies of accidents to update motor vehicle history and driver record files. Minimum information suggested by HSPS No. 18 for a driver-reported motor vehicle accident includes vehicle make, model, year, body type, model name, and VIN for all vehicles.

The Highway Safety Act of 1966 established the framework for the present motor vehicle registration safety program. Two of the specific objectives of the program are to:

- (1) Provide a system for cross-referencing and linking vehicle and ownership information for highway traffic safety studies to research highway accidents and injury causation investigations.
- (2) Develop and maintain registration data bases to assist the vehicle inspection program and the manufacturer's recall campaigns for defective vehicles.

The Safety Board believes that each State should collect and enter VIN data in its accident reporting systems to enable accident studies to be performed by vehicle type. This will allow commercial and out-of-State vehicles to be included in accident data analyses and, in some cases, eliminate the costly cross-referencing to the vehicle registration file.

Therefore, as a result of its investigation, the Safety Board recommends that the States of California, Hawaii, Idaho, Indiana, Kentucky, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Mississippi, New York, North Dakota, Ohio, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Virginia, and Wyoming, and the District of Columbia:

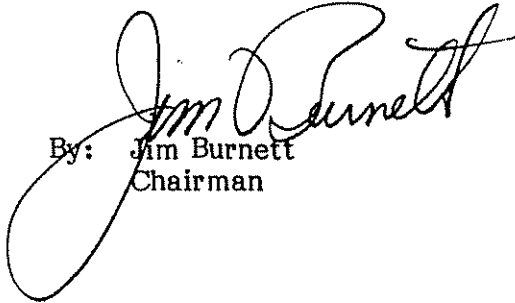
Revise the existing motor vehicle accident reporting system to include the vehicle identification number as a data element on the accident report forms and in the computerized accident data base. (Class II, Priority Action) (H-87-6)

Also, the Safety Board issued Safety Recommendation H-87-7 the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration and Safety Recommendations H-87-8 and -9 to the American Medical Association.

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 actions taken as a result of its

safety recommendations and 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-87-6 in your reply.

BURNETT, Chairman, GOLDMAN, Vice Chairman, and LAUBER and NALL, Members, concurred in this recommendation.



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Chairman

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