



National Transportation Safety Board
Washington, DC 20594
Highway Accident Brief

Accident No.: HWY-98-SH-003
Accident Type: Single vehicle run-off-the-road and vault
Location: Pine Bluff, Arkansas
Date and Time: October 13, 1997; 2:10 p.m.
Vehicle 1 (V1): 1992 Mack tractor-semitrailer, empty
Vehicle 2 (V2): 1995 Chevrolet Silverado pickup truck
Fatalities: 5 fatalities

Accident Description

The truckdriver ran off the left side of U.S. Highway 65, struck a ditch embankment, vaulted, and came down on top of a stopped pickup truck in a private driveway. (See figure 1.) The pickup truck occupants were ejected and fatally injured. The driver of the Mack tractor-semitrailer was also fatally injured. His blood sample revealed a therapeutic dose of tramadol, a toothache pain medication, which can cause sleepiness, dizziness, and seizures.

State/Federal Oversight

Arkansas adopted the *Federal Motor Carrier Safety Regulations* with some variances; none of the variances were pertinent to the carrier or driver at the time of the accident. In 1991, the U.S. Department of Transportation conducted a safety review of the carrier and assigned a rating of unsatisfactory. No followup occurred. A Federal compliance review following the fatal accident revealed that the accident-involved carrier was in violation of many regulations: the carrier did not have a drug testing program, and it did not have the required driver qualification records, hours-of-service records, or maintenance records on file. The accident-involved truckdriver did not have a medical certificate; whether he was medically fit to drive is not known.

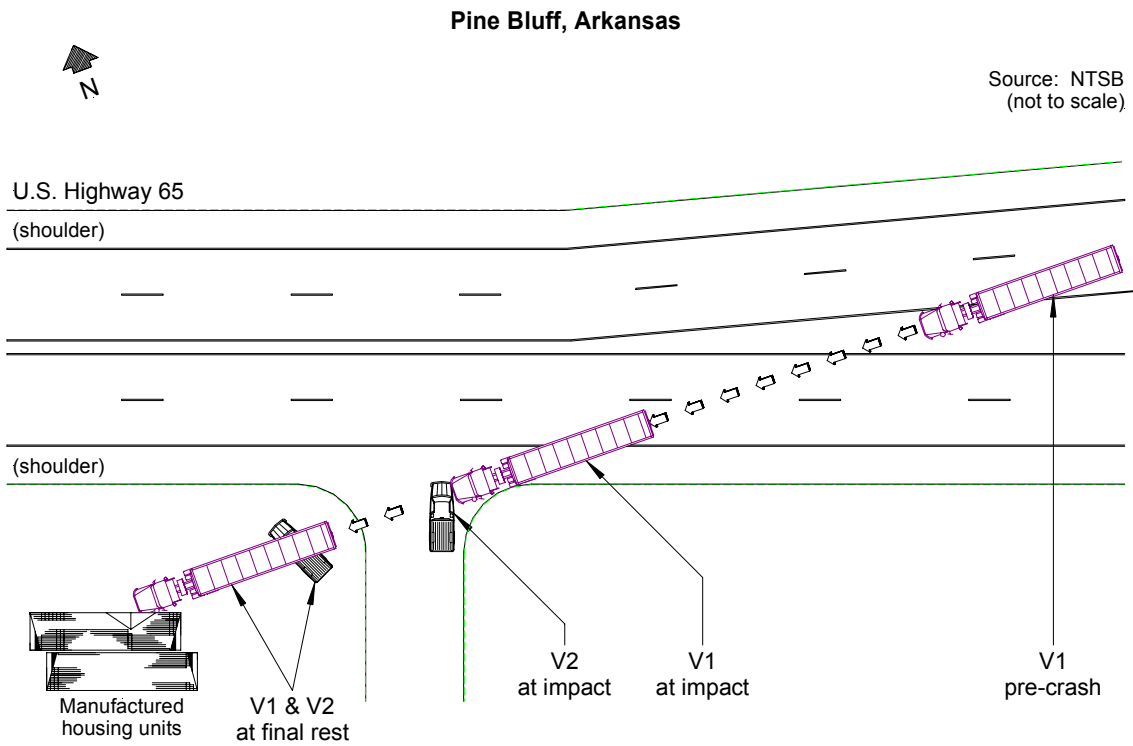


Figure 1. Accident diagram.

Probable Cause

The National Transportation Safety Board determines that the probable cause of the accident was the truckdriver's use of a prescription drug that may have caused him to become sleepy or incapacitated.

Adopted: September 17, 2002