



National Transportation Safety Board  
Washington, D.C. 20594

Highway Accident Brief

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**Accident No.:** HWY-98-FH-004  
**Accident Type:** Loss of control on downgrade; collision of load with school bus  
**Location:** Franklin, North Carolina  
**Date and Time:** October 16, 1997; 9:30 p.m.  
**Vehicle 1 (V1):** 1988 Kenworth tractor with a 1988 Lufkin flatbed semitrailer hauling concrete telephone cable vaults  
**Vehicle 2 (V2):** 1984 International/Thomas Built school bus  
**Fatalities/Injuries:** 2 fatalities, 1 moderate injury, 8 minor injuries

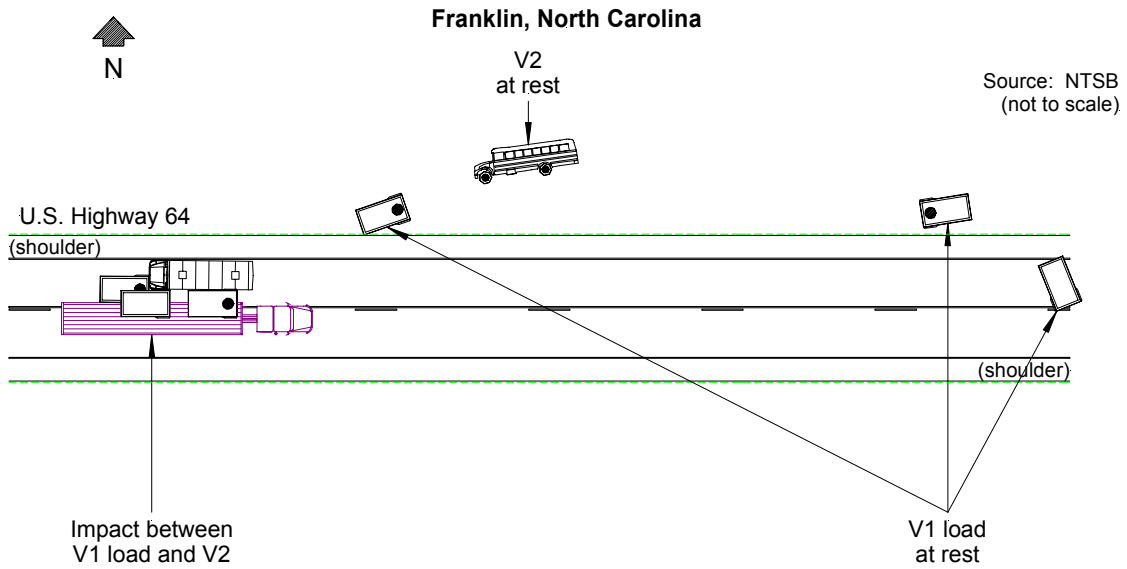
**Accident Description**

The tractor-semitrailer was traveling downhill on the wrong side of U.S. Highway 64 on a curve when the load broke loose and struck the school bus. The tractor-semitrailer overturned and slid to a stop. (See figure 1.) The school bus driver and one passenger were killed; one passenger sustained moderate injuries. The truckdriver and seven bus passengers sustained minor injuries. The school bus was destroyed and the tractor-semitrailer sustained moderate damage. Witnesses described the truck as traveling over the 35-mph speed limit and on the wrong side of the road just before the accident.

The truckdriver was arrested for driving under the influence of alcohol (a portable breath tester indicated that his blood alcohol level exceeded 0.10 percent). An open vodka bottle was found in the tractor. The truckdriver had been convicted twice before of driving commercial vehicles while intoxicated.

**State/Federal Oversight**

North Carolina has 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. The carrier received a satisfactory rating following a Federal compliance review in January 1994.



**Figure 1.** Accident diagram.

### Probable Cause

The National Transportation Safety Board determines that the probable cause of the accident was the truckdriver's failure to control his truck due to alcohol impairment.

**Adopted:** September 17, 2002