

NTSB Investigative Process Office of Highway Safety

Shawn Currie

August 24, 2023

NTSB – Who We Are & Mission

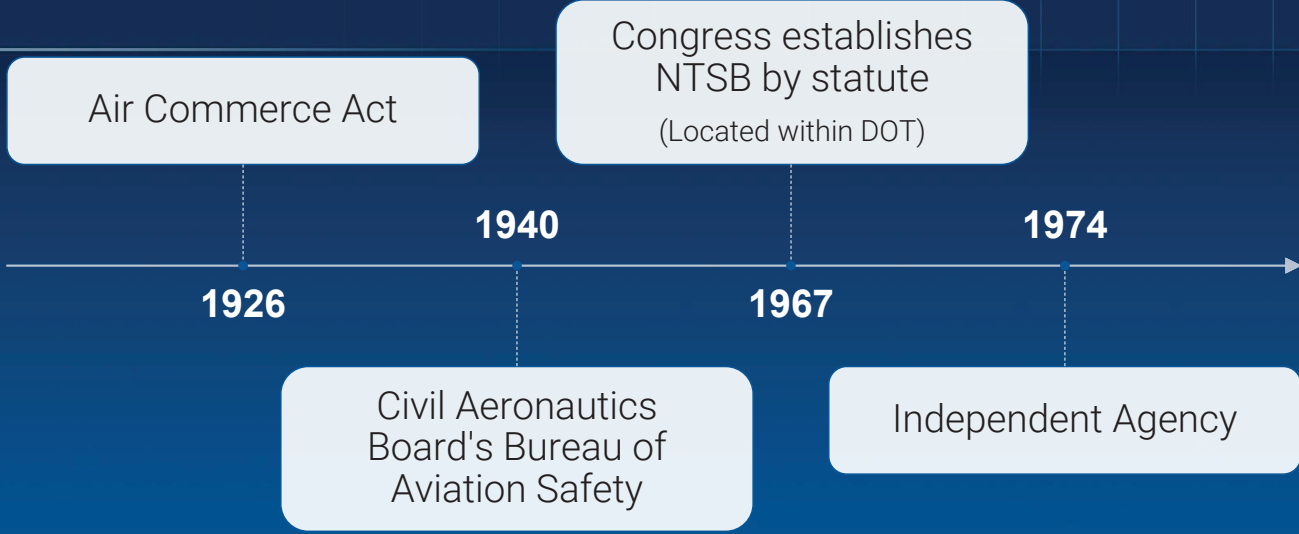
Independent federal agency charged by Congress with investigating every civil aviation accident in the United States and significant accidents in other modes of transportation – railroad, transit, highway, marine, pipeline, and commercial space.

- Determine probable cause of accidents and issue safety recommendations aimed at preventing future accidents.
- Carry out special studies concerning transportation safety and coordinate resources of the federal government and other organizations to provide assistance to victims and their family members.



Mission

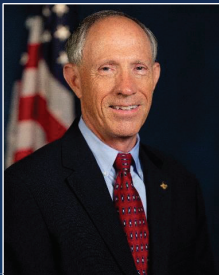
Making transportation safer by conducting independent accident investigations, advocating safety improvements, and deciding pilots' and mariners' certification appeals.



NTSB Board Members



Chair Homendy



Vice Chair Landsberg

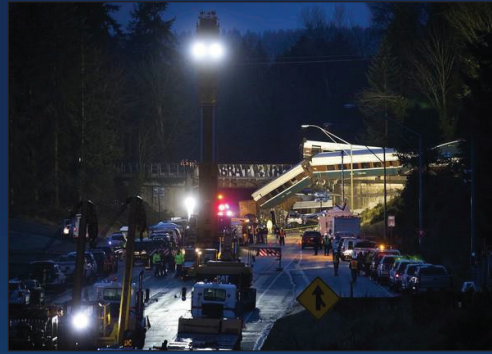


Member Graham



Member Chapman





5

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Office of Highway Safety

- Total Staff of 38
 - Managers, investigators, writers, support staff
 - Investigations Division
 - Multi-disciplinary Investigations Branch
 - Special Investigations Branch
 - Report Development Division



6

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NTSB Authority

- The National Transportation Safety Board shall investigate or have investigated (in detail the Board prescribes) and establish the facts, circumstances, and cause or probable cause of—
 - (B) a highway accident, including a railroad grade crossing accident, the Board selects in cooperation with a State;
 - (F) any other accident related to the transportation of individuals or property when the Board decides—
 - (i) the accident is catastrophic;
 - (ii) the accident involves problems of a recurring character; or
 - (iii) the investigation of the accident would carry out this chapter.

49 U.S.C. § 1131(a)

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Authority in Highway Investigations

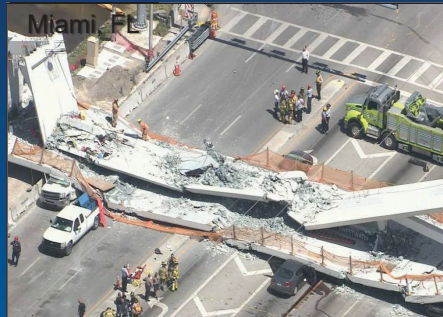
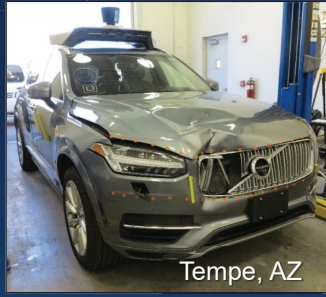
The NTSB is responsible for the investigation of selected highway accidents (e.g., collisions, crashes and explosions), including at railroad grade-crossing accidents. Such investigations will be conducted in cooperation with the designated authorities of the state or local jurisdiction in which the accident occurred.

49 CFR § 831.30



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Crashes We Investigate



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Highway Crash Notification

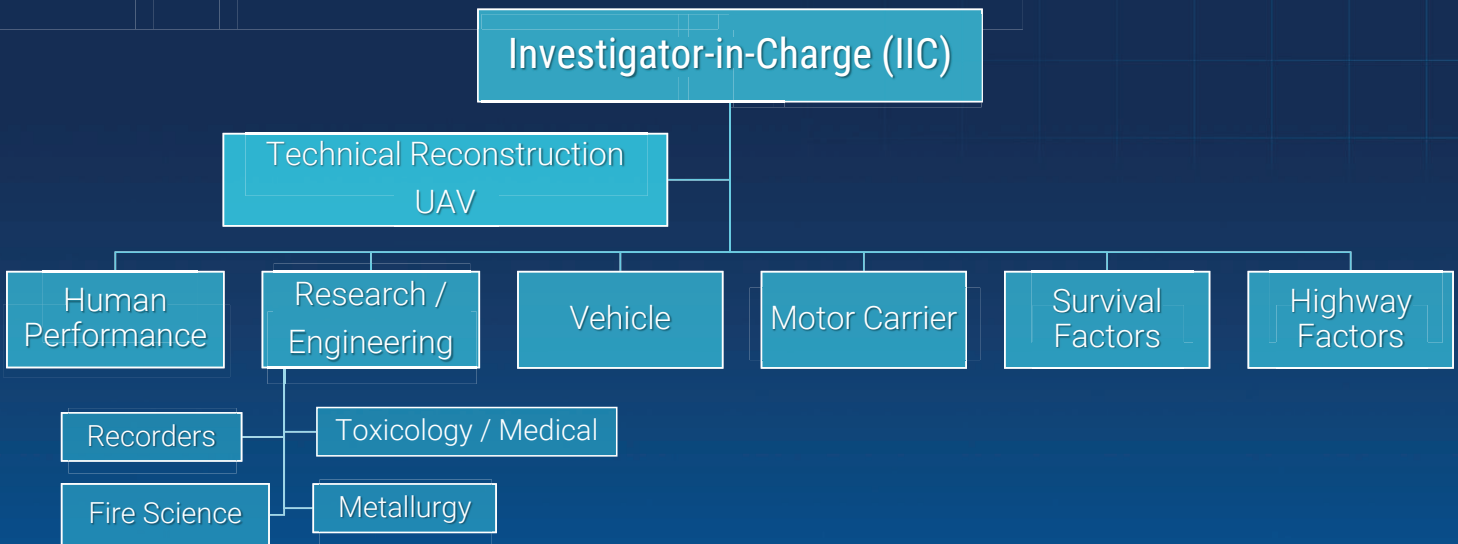
Criteria: (examples)

- Tier 1: urgent notification
 - CMV crash with 3+ fatalities
 - Bus crash with 1+ fatalities
 - Fatal AV/EV crash
- Tier 2: watch list
 - Grade crossing crash with bus
 - Crash during AV testing
- Tier 3: discretionary notification
 - Crash with highway issues and another mode



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Multi-disciplinary Team Approach



11

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Parallel Safety Investigation

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- Safety investigation
- Party system
- Multidisciplinary team
- Subpoena authority
- Factual reports
- Board meeting
- Safety recommendations



Law Enforcement

- Criminal investigation
- State Attorney
- Reconstruction team
- Search/arrest warrants
- Criminal reports
- Court
- Prosecution

12

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Authority



- An officer or employee of the NTSB may
 - Enter property where a transportation accident has occurred or wreckage from the accident is located and do anything necessary to conduct an investigation.
 - Inspect any record, process, control, or facility related to an accident investigation under this chapter.

49 CFR §1134(a)(1) & (2)

False statement, concealment

- ...Knowingly and willfully – falsifies, conceals, or covers up by any trick, scheme, or device a material fact...

18 USC § 1001

The Party Process



Typical parties

- Law enforcement (LEOs)
- State highway organizations
- Motor carriers
- Vehicle and component manufacturers
- Other federal agencies

NTSB Party System

- **Benefits**
- Technical expertise in proposed investigative area
- Participation in fact-finding phase (on-scene and post-on-scene)
- Opportunity to ensure complete and accurate factual record
- Access to factual information and ability to quickly initiate preventative or corrective actions
- Ability to submit proposed findings of facts, conclusions, and recommendations
- Knowledge of ongoing activities

15

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NTSB Party System

- **Responsibilities**
- Review of factual reports
- Sharing of information pertinent to the investigation
- Limitation on release of investigative information
- **Choice not to be a party**
- Possible access to very limited factual information
- Still must share pertinent information

16

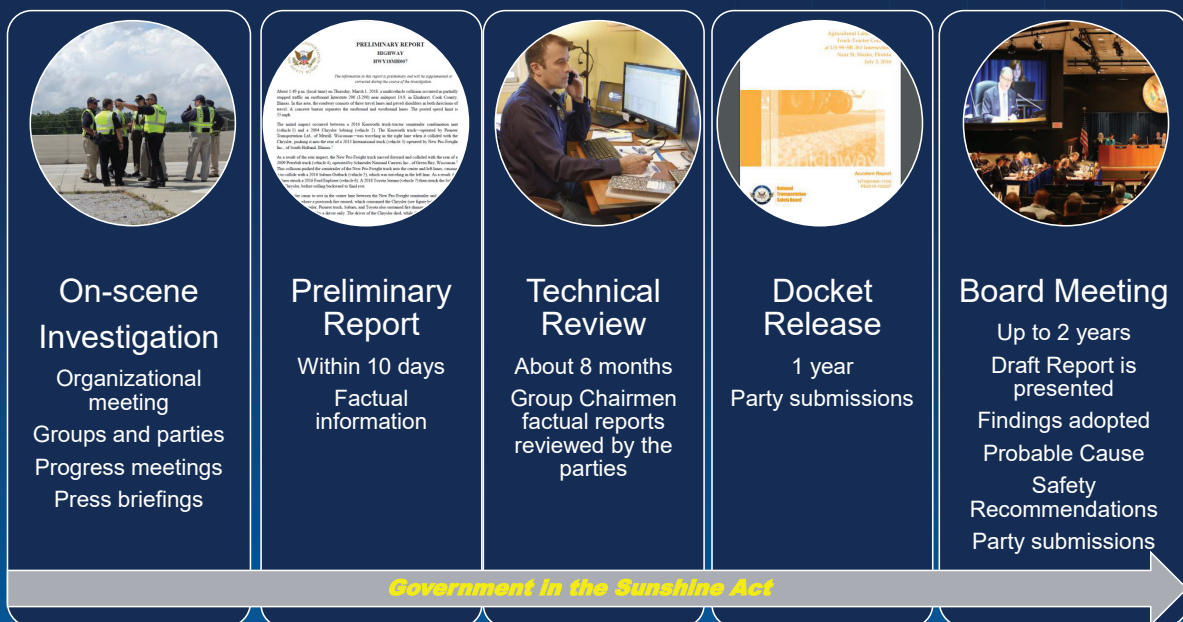
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Investigator-In-Charge (IIC)

Post-“on-scene” through end of investigation

- Primary contact for all aspects of investigation
- Overall coordination of investigation
- Preliminary report, Board Member briefing
- Work planning meeting
- Follow-up trips, component testing, tear-downs/exams
- Technical review of factual reports
- Public docket release
- Work with Project Manager on completion of final report and board meeting, if applicable

NTSB Investigative Process



Highway Product Types

- Preliminary reports
- Investigative hearings
 - Example: East Palestine, OH – June 2023
- Highway Investigation Reports (HIR)
 - Board-adopted (sunshine meeting or electronic vote)
 - Director-approved, if delegated meeting or electronic vote
- Safety Alerts
- Meetings, roundtables, webinars
- Petition for reconsideration (49 *CFR* § 845.32)

19

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Board Meeting

Public meeting in Washington, DC

Webcast

Staff presentations

Board deliberations

Official adoption of

- Report
- Findings
- Probable cause
- Recommendations

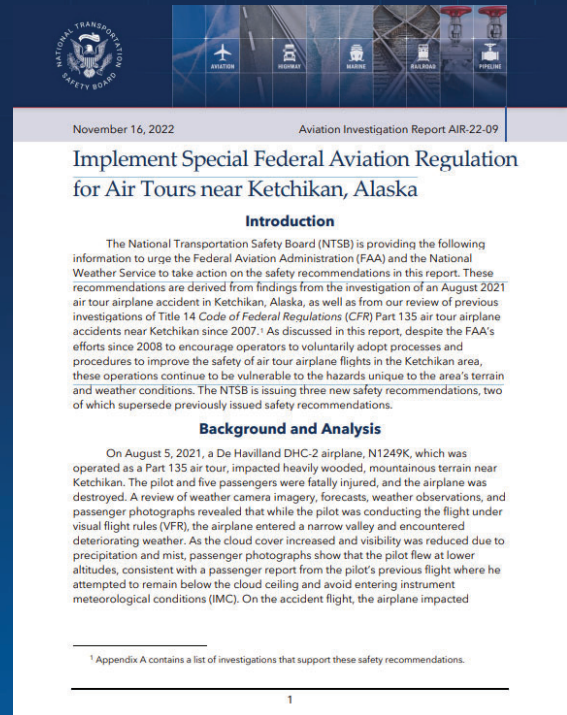


20

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What Are Safety Recommendations?

- NTSB's most important product
- Based on findings from NTSB investigations
- Suggest a course of action to improve vehicle design and maintenance, operational procedures, policy, training, or any other safety issue identified
- Each recommendation's language, recipient, and justification are approved by the Board
- NTSB's "official" position on needed action



Two Parts to a Recommendation Classification

1. Action Completed?
 - In progress: **Open**
 - Completed: **Closed**
2. Did the action address the recommendation?
 - For both Open and Closed
 - **Acceptable**: Action fully addresses the recommendation
 - **Acceptable Alternate**: Achieves intent in an alternate manner
 - **Exceeds**: Goes beyond the intent of the recommendation
 - **Unacceptable**: Action does not fully achieve intent, or it is taking an unacceptably long time



2021-2023 NTSB
MOST WANTED LIST
 OF TRANSPORTATION SAFETY IMPROVEMENTS



Highway

Require Collision-Avoidance and Connected-Vehicle Technologies on all Vehicles



Highway

Implement a Comprehensive Strategy to Eliminate Speeding-Related Crashes



Highway

Prevent Alcohol- and Other Drug-Impaired Driving



Highway

Eliminate Distracted Driving



Highway

Protect Vulnerable Road Users Through a Safe System Approach

Promote Transportation Safety

- Investigators often present at
 - Conferences
 - Symposia/roundtables
 - NTSB training classes
 - Peer training



Multivehicle Crash Mt. Pleasant Township, Pennsylvania

25

Parties to the Investigation

Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA)

Pennsylvania State Police (PSP)

Pennsylvania Turnpike Commission (PTC)

United Parcel Service, Inc. (UPS)

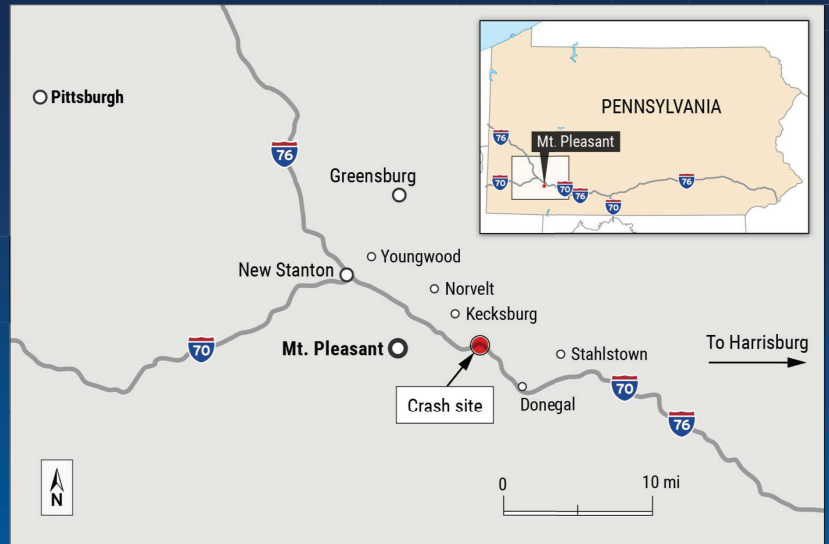
FedEx Ground Package System, Inc. (FedEx)

Daimler Trucks North America

26

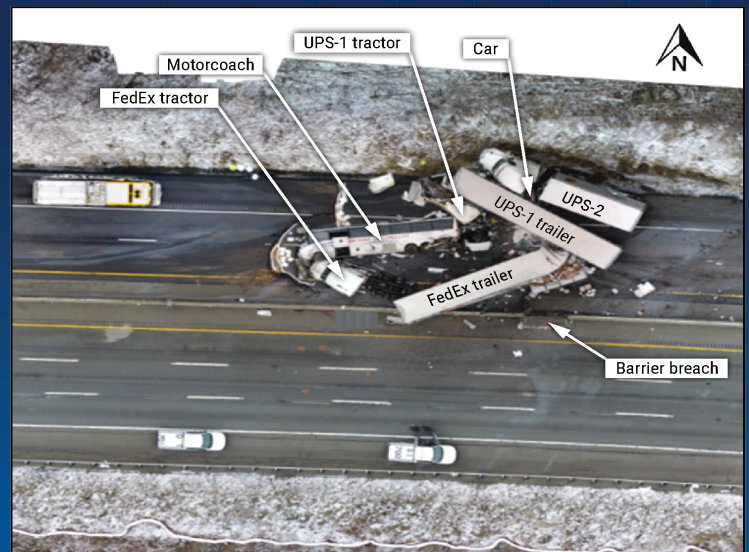
Crash Information and Location

- Interstate 70/76
 - Pennsylvania Turnpike
 - Curving mountainous section
 - 36 miles southeast of Pittsburgh
 - Mt. Pleasant Township



Crash Vehicles

- Final rest positions of vehicles
 - Motorcoach
 - FedEx tractor & trailer
 - UPS-1 tractor & trailer
 - Passenger car
 - UPS-2 tractor & trailer



Source: Pennsylvania State Police – NTSB overlay

Crash Scene

- Vehicles at final rest
- Left-hand curve
- East and westbound lanes
- 55-mph warning sign



Source: Pennsylvania State Police – NTSB overlay

29

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Injury Table

Occupants	Fatal	Injured	None	Unknown	Total
Motorcoach driver	1	--	--	--	1
Motorcoach passengers	2	49	2	6	59
FedEx driver	--	--	1	--	1
FedEx codriver	--	1	--	--	1
UPS-1 driver	1	--	--	--	1
UPS-1 codriver	1	--	--	--	1
UPS-2 driver	--	--	1	--	1
UPS-2 codriver	--	--	1	--	1
Car driver	--	--	1	--	1
Car passengers	--	--	2	--	2
TOTAL	5	50	8	6	69

30

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Exclusions

- Motorcoach driver
 - Driver qualifications
 - Use of alcohol or other drugs
 - Cell phone use
 - Insufficient evidence of motorcoach driver fatigue
- Emergency response was timely and effective
- Mechanical condition of motorcoach
- Pavement condition
- Roadway salt treatment addressing freezing conditions

31

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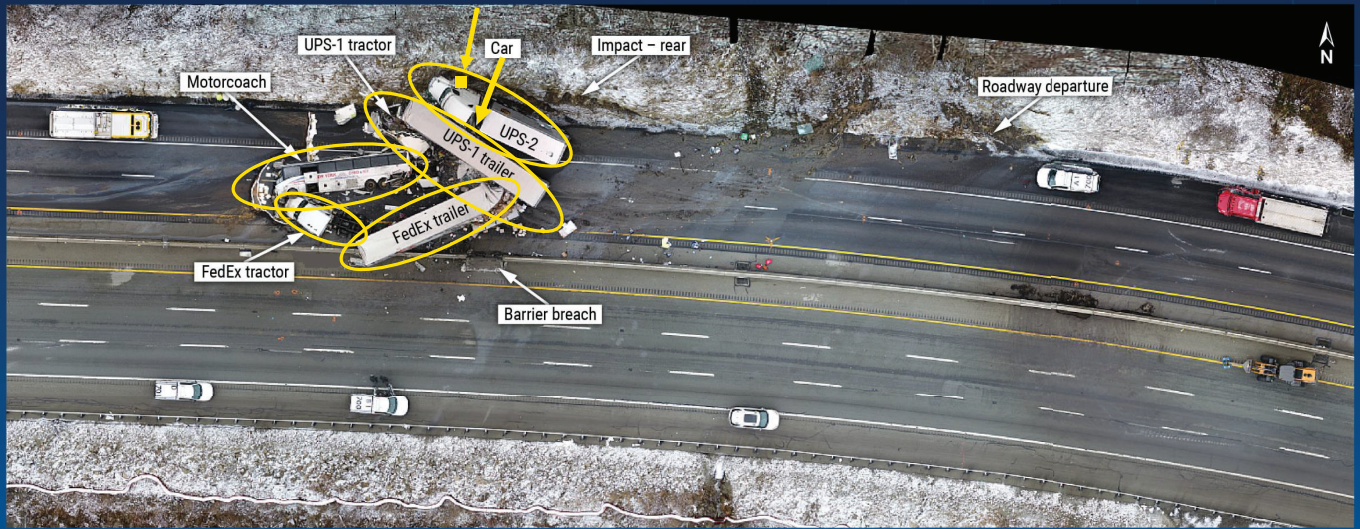
Safety Issues

- Commercial drivers' speeds while driving in wet conditions
- Forward collision avoidance systems and connected vehicle technology
- Onboard video event recorder systems

32

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Vehicle Positions at Final Rest



Source: Pennsylvania State Police

2005 Van Hool c2045 Motorcoach



Overtaken Motorcoach



Source: FedEx forward-facing video, annotated by NTSB

- Initial position of rest was blocking both travel lanes and shoulders
- Entered curve at 77 mph
- Light braking upon entering curve decreased speed to 70 mph
- After brakes released vehicle speed changes not associated with braking or throttle occurred
- Speed changes consistent with vehicle yawing from excessive steering inputs
- Sufficient roadway traction existed for normal travel

35

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FedEx Combination Unit

2018 Freightliner Cascadia

2019 53' Hyundai Translead semitrailer

- Traveling through curve at 53 mph in right lane
- Had been passed by motorcoach 79 seconds before the two collided
- Driver responded about 5 seconds before impact
- Driver steered left and braked, impacted motorcoach at about 21 mph



36

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UPS-1 Combination Unit



2018 Freightliner Cascadia

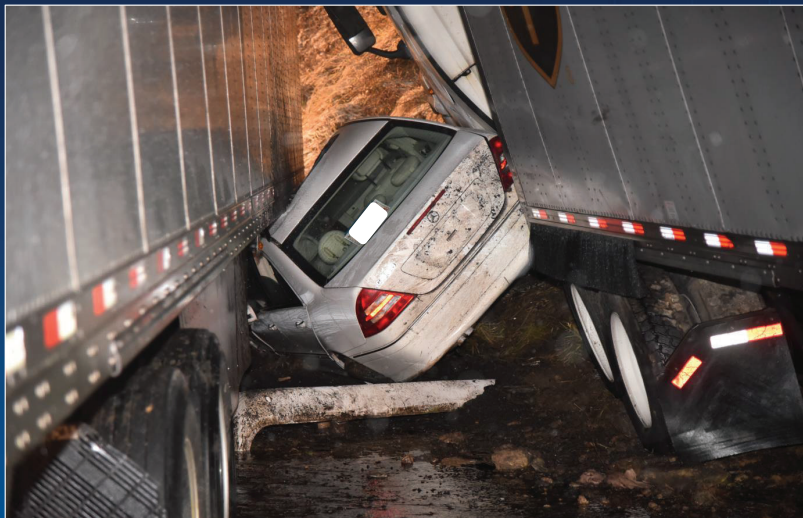
2018 53' Stoughton semitrailer

- Entered curve at 71 mph, traveling in left lane
- Evidence that driver braked and swerved to the right
- Tractor collided with right rear of FedEx trailer
- Average speed 67 mph during preceding two hours of travel on turnpike

37

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2007 Mercedes Benz C280



Source: Pennsylvania State Police

38

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UPS-2 Combination Unit

- Entered curve at 69 mph, traveling in right lane
- Driver braking lightly to control speed
- Driver observed UPS-1 impact, increased braking and swerved toward right shoulder
- Average speed 65 mph during preceding 2.5 hours of travel on turnpike



2018 Freightliner Cascadia
2020 28.5' Stoughton semitrailer

Onboard Video Event Recorders

- FedEx truck video system provided key information:
 - Motorcoach speed and lane position when passing
 - Position and visibility of overturned motorcoach on roadway
 - FedEx driver reacted quickly to hazard
 - FedEx truck speed and crash severity



Source: FedEx forward-facing video

Lack of Data on Motorcoach

- Cause of motorcoach initial loss of control
- Driver performance including steering inputs and fatigue
- Engagement of engine brake



41

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What We Found: *Onboard Video Event Recorders*

- Forward- and inward-facing video event recorder system on the FedEx truck provided valuable information
- Video event recorder systems can provide key safety information about crash circumstances
- Video event recorder systems can be proactively used to improve driver performance
- What we propose:
 - One recommendation to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration
 - One recommendation to the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration
 - One reiteration to the American Bus Association, United Motorcoach Association

42

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Motorcoach Crash Trip

- Departed NYC at 10:00 p.m.
- Scheduled arrival 4:15 a.m.
- 10 miles from destination
- Driving for 7 hours
- Unable to determine sleep



43

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Environmental Conditions



Source: Pennsylvania State Police

44

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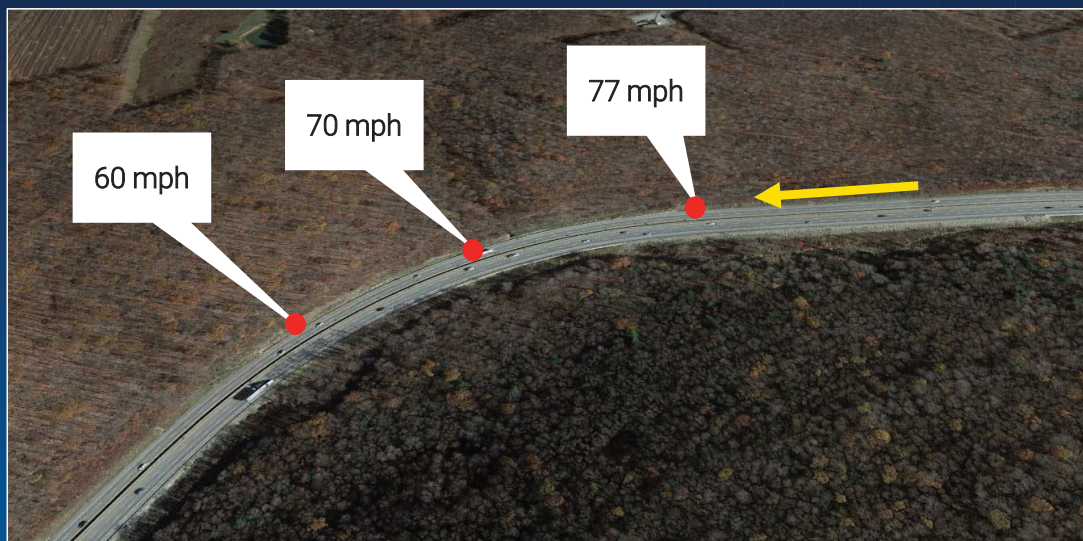
Driving in Adverse Weather Conditions

- 25% of speeding-related large-truck fatalities occurred in adverse weather (FARS)
- Adjust speed to safely match weather conditions
- Increase following distance
- Take curves at slower speeds and do not brake while in curves
- Avoid using engine brakes

Motorcoach Driver Background

- Experienced and properly licensed
 - 11 years of commercial driving experience
 - Class "A" commercial license, passenger endorsement, no restrictions
 - 2-year medical certification
- Previous excessive speed citation (September 2019)
- 2 previous minor crashes

Motorcoach Driver



Source: Google Maps, annotated by NTSB

47

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What We Found: *Motorcoach Driver*

- Traveling at excessive speed on wet roadway in descending curve
- Excessive speed, roadway conditions contributed to loss of control
- Driver likely made excessive steering inputs
- Likely use of engine brake contributed to loss of traction

48

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FedEx Driver Response

- FedEx truck entered curve at 53 mph
- Driver steered to left, applied brake
- Driver reacted within 0.3 seconds
- FedEx truck slowed to 21 mph



Source: FedEx truck forward-facing video, annotated by NTSB

49

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UPS-1 Driver Response

- UPS-1 entered curve at 71 mph
- FedEx truck had begun slowing
- Driver applied brakes, steered right
- UPS-1 collision occurred at 56 mph



Source: Pennsylvania State Police, annotated by NTSB

50

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UPS-2 Driver Response

- UPS-2 entered curve at 69 mph
- UPS-2 3–5 seconds behind UPS-1
- Driver observed UPS-1 collision
- Driver applied brakes, steered right
- UPS-2 came to rest next to sedan



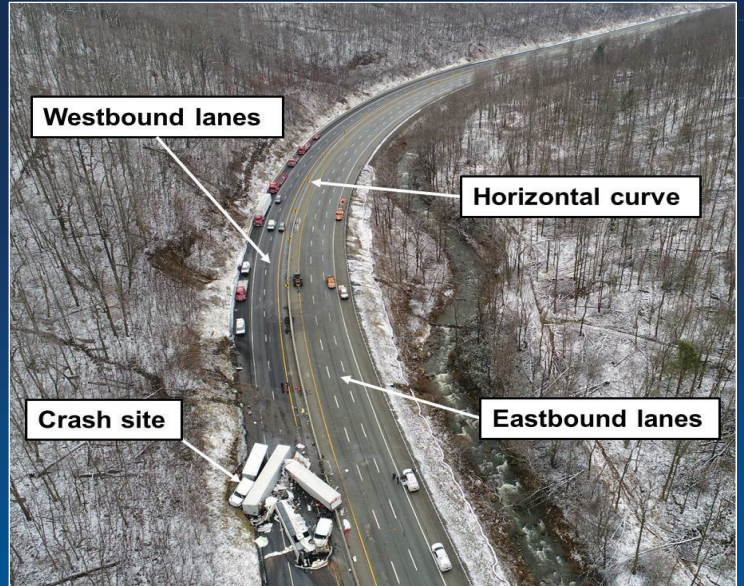
Source: Pennsylvania State Police, annotated by NTSB

What We Found: *FedEx and UPS Drivers' Responses*

- FedEx driver reduced speed on wet roadway, reduced crash severity
- UPS-1 driver's initial speed too fast for wet roadway conditions
 - Driver's braking attempt failed to reduce speed before impact
 - Contributed to severity of crash from impact speed
- UPS-2 driver had visual cues to warn of collisions ahead

Highway Characteristics

- Turnpike
 - Built in 1940
 - Numerous horizontal curves
 - Crash occurred in westbound lanes
- Horizontal curve
 - Downgrade slope of 3 percent
- Grooved rumble strips
- Resurfaced in September 2019



Source: Pennsylvania State Police

53

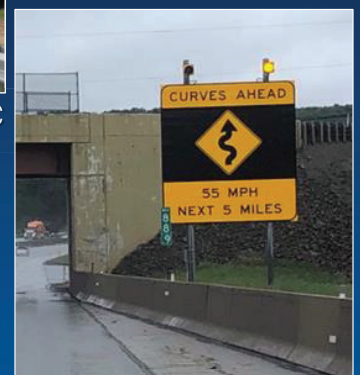
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Signage

- 38 signs installed along westbound lanes
- 5 dynamic message signs
- “Curves ahead” advisory speed sign with flashing beacons
 - Warn motorists to reduce speed to 55 mph, particularly at night
- Connected vehicle technology
 - Harrisburg Connected Project



Source: PTC



Source: PTC

54

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Speed Limits

- Regulatory 70 mph speed limit
 - Maximum speed on highway section, established by law, and is enforceable
 - 1,054 miles of straight sections
- Advisory 55 mph speed sign
 - Recommended safe speed for all vehicles, not enforceable
- 150 horizontal curves (51 miles) for advisory speeds of 55, 60, 65 mph



55

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Chronology of Speed Limits

- Regulatory speed limit has fluctuated over the years
 - Before May 2016, regulatory speed limit was 65 mph
 - Today, regulatory speed limit is 70 mph
- Commission assessed safety of the curves
 - Design speed is the maximum safe speed that vehicles can travel
 - Curve preceding the crash location was computed at 62 mph
- Advisory speed signs installed at all curves where the design speed was less than the 70 mph speed limit

56

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85th Percentile Speed

- FHWA encourages 2 expert systems tools to establish appropriate speed limits
 - USLIMITS2
 - NCHRP 966
- 85th percentile speed (input variable) in both
 - Outdated form of obtaining speed study results
 - Been in use since the 1940s
- De-emphasize use of 85th percentile speed



NTSB Investigations of Speeding-Related Crashes

- Long history of investigating crashes involving speeding
 - 2003 motorcoach crash in Hewitt, Texas
 - 2017 safety study *Reducing Speeding-Related Crashes Involving Passenger Vehicles*
- NTSB's Most Wanted List
 - Critical safety issue since 2019
- Safe System Approach
 - Infrastructure solutions, behavioral solutions, vehicle-based solutions, and advanced technological solutions

What We Found: *Variable Speed Limit Signs*

- Effective countermeasure to speeding
 - Dynamically resetting regulatory speed limit
 - Response to changing roadway conditions
 - Speed limit is enforceable
- PDOT installed variable speed limit signs on I-76
- May have prevented the crash



Source: Pennsylvania Department of Transportation

59

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What We Found: *Excessive Speeding*

- Excessive speeding near horizontal curves
- Variable speed limit signs are consistent with safe system approach of providing safe speeds
- De-emphasize 85th percentile speed used in FHWA's tools, USLIMITS2 and NCHRP 966, to set appropriate speed limits

60

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Z&D Tour Inc. (USDOT 2313334)

- Rockaway, New Jersey
- Owned 8 motorcoaches, employed 8 drivers
- No alerts in Behavior Analysis and Safety Improvement Categories (BASICS)
- 58-year-old male driver, Class A New York CDL

FedEx Ground Package System Inc. (USDOT 265752)

- Moon Township, Pennsylvania
- Leases about 66,500 vehicles, 91,800 drivers
- Sioux Trucking
 - 35-year-old male, California Class A CDL
- Alerts in BASICS for Hours of Service and Driver Fitness

United Parcel Service Inc. (USDOT 21800)

- Atlanta, Georgia
- About 126,000 trucks, 118,000 drivers
- UPS-1 Driver: 52-year-old male, Pennsylvania Class A CDL
- UPS-2 Driver: 62-year-old male, New Jersey Class A CDL

63

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Maintenance Issues

- UPS Truck 1 – misaligned radar sensor
- Error code and warning since June 2019
 - Detected by Penske in July 2019
 - Noted several times on maintenance records
 - No Driver Vehicle Inspection Report (DVIR) entry by driver



64

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Driver Vehicle Inspection Reports from UPS Truck 1

PENSKE DRIVER'S VEHICLE INSPECTION REPORT
(Bus, Coach-Tractor-Trailer-Straight Truck-Dolly)

COMPANY: UPS DATE OF REPORT: _____ DATE NEEDED: _____

TRAILER NO. _____ DOLLY NO. _____ POWER UNIT NO. _____

POWER UNIT: C0352
MILEAGE (FINISH): 545212
MILEAGE (START): 5120
MILEAGE (TOTAL): _____

TRAILER/DOLLY: _____
MILEAGE (FINISH): _____
MILEAGE (START): _____
MILEAGE (TOTAL): _____

AUTHORITY:
Federal Motor Carrier Safety Reg. 398.11 Driver Vehicle Inspection Report(s). (a) Report Required - every motor carrier shall require its driver to report, and every driver shall prepare a report in writing at the completion of each day's work on each vehicle operated... (b) Report Content - the report shall identify the motor vehicle and list any defect or deficiency discovered by or reported to the driver which would affect safety or operation of the motor vehicle or result in its mechanical breakdown. If no defect or deficiency is discovered by or reported to the driver, the report shall so indicate. In all instances, the driver shall sign the vehicle inspection report.

INSTRUCTIONS:
DRIVER: Use an "X" in the appropriate spaces below when an item(s) is found to be unsatisfactory. If defect(s) found, complete a separate Driver Vehicle Inspection Report form for each defective unit. If no defects are found, "X" the certification box below, sign and date the form.
MECHANIC: When completed, sign and date the form below at block number 2.
NOTE: If defects are noted on the DWIR, the Original (Motor Carrier) copy must contain all three signatures as numbered 1, 2, 3.

ITEM INSPECTED	DRIVER	ITEM INSPECTED	DRIVER	ITEM INSPECTED	DRIVER
Headlights		Rear - Mirror		Clutch	
Tail Lights		Safety Equipment & Back up Alarms		Transmission	
Directional Turn Signals		Horn		Engine	
Clearance/Marker Lights		Suspension		Heater/AC	
Stop Lights		Tires		Coupling Devices	
Reflectors		Wheels/Rims/Lugs		Instruments	
Mud Flaps		Service Brakes		Brake Lines To Trailer	
Windshield Wipers		Parking Brake		Electric Lines to Trailer	
Glass		Steering Mechanism		Chains (Flat-Down)	
Body		Entrance Doors & Controls		Wheel Chair Lift	
Wash System		Sealing - Emergency Buzzer			

I certify that all equipment listed above / pre-inspection, was found in satisfactory condition after checking all items appearing above. REPORT DATE: 4/20/21

DRIVER'S REMARKS: Use Vehicle Drawings for repairs of final copy No show defect locations if necessary.

SIGNATURE OF PERSON CERTIFYING THAT SAFETY DEFECTS HAVE BEEN CORRECTED OR CORRECTION IS UNNECESSARY: _____ DATE: _____

REPAIR ORDER NUMBER: _____ DATE: _____

MECHANIC'S REMARKS: _____

ups DRIVER VEHICLE INSPECTION REPORT

Vehicle No. 833758

SIGN THIS REPORT

Maintain Original (White) current on vehicle.
Turn in Duplicate (Yellow) daily.

DRIVER REPORT (Check)
 Condition of this vehicle is satisfactory.
 This vehicle requires Safety related service on: _____

This vehicle requires Non Safety related service on: _____

TECHNICIAN'S DESCRIPTION OF WORK PERFORMED

TECHNICIAN'S SIGNATURE _____ DATE: _____

I have reviewed the above report.
DRIVER'S SIGNATURE _____ DATE: _____

01467114 09/17 RRD

65

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Postcrash Actions

- Penske
 - Places vehicle with Forward Collision Avoidance System defects out of service
 - Lessor receives notification email
 - Between May 2020 and December 2021, over 6,300 vehicles affected
- UPS
 - Changed driver training
 - Changed check ride form to account for advanced safety systems

66

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What We Found: *Reporting Nonfunctional Safety Systems*

- Maintaining the full functionality of installed collision avoidance systems is critical to vehicle safety
- If drivers report defects or faults in collision avoidance system, repairs can be made more readily, improving safety

67

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Heavy Vehicle Speed Limiters

- Motorcoach did not have a speed limiter
- Passive speed limiters
 - Maximum vehicle speed is pre-set, mechanically or electronically
- Advanced speed limiters (intelligent speed assistance)
 - Relies on cameras and GPS to read and verify roadway speed limit
 - Adjusts vehicle maximum speed in real time

68

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What We Found: *Heavy Vehicle Speed Limiters*

- Speed contributed to both the cause and severity of this crash
- Speed limiters help drivers avoid exceeding regulatory, advisory, and variable speed limits

Forward Collision Avoidance Systems (CAS)

- Three Freightliner truck-tractors were equipped with forward CAS
 - Not functioning on UPS-1
 - FedEx and UPS-2 did not activate precrash
- CAS: audible warning, automatic emergency braking (AEB)
- Designed to mitigate or prevent rear-end crashes
- Performance affected by
 - Generational capabilities
 - Roadway and crash parameters

Forward CAS: Standards and Testing

- No federal performance standards for CAS in heavy vehicles
- NHTSA proposed testing protocols in 2019
 - No pass/fail criteria
 - Maximum tested speed of 45 mph
 - Straight roadway, clear weather
 - Rear of a passenger vehicle as the only target
- Parameters of this crash were likely beyond NHTSA's proposed testing protocols

What We Found: *Collision Avoidance Systems*

- Parameters in the Mt. Pleasant Township crash beyond proposed system capabilities and proposed federal test procedures
- Voluntary installation and use of forward CAS and AEB in heavy vehicles by manufacturers and operators

Connected Vehicle Technology

- V2X enables vehicles to communicate with:
 - Other vehicles or roadway users
 - Infrastructure
- Communication identifies vehicle's speed, location, direction of travel
- Not impacted by:
 - roadway geometry or weather
 - does not require line of sight
 - vehicle speeds or positioning in roadway

Probable Cause

The National Transportation Safety Board determines that the probable cause of the crash near Mt. Pleasant Township, Pennsylvania, was the motorcoach driver's loss of control due to the motorcoach's unsafe speed on the wet curve and the driver's likely excessive steering inputs, which caused the motorcoach to run off the road, strike an embankment, and subsequently roll over across the roadway, which led to two commercial trucks colliding with the motorcoach. Contributing to the severity of the crash was the high initial and impact speed of the second truck.

NTSB Lessons Learned

- Have a quality hiring process
 - Background check
 - Long license look back
- Have policies
 - Follow them
 - Hold people accountable
- How much are you willing to risk?

75

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- Talk about issues
 - Review videos
 - Coach
 - Reward/Punish
- Fatigue
- Speed
- Unsafe Driving
- Video

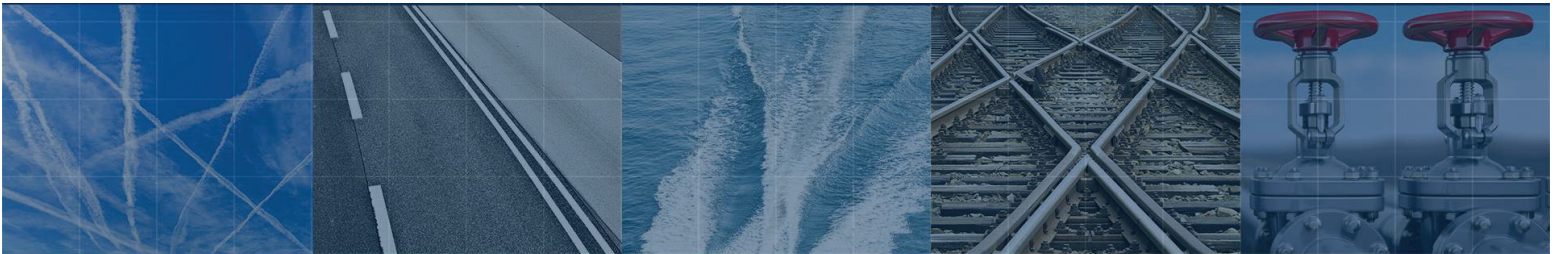
76

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At the end of the day, you can have all the policies and procedures in the world. But it comes down to your driver when they are all alone...

77

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202-257-7197

78