

## NTSB Finds Defective, Out-of-Adjustment Brakes in Wisconsin Motorcoach-Semitrailer Accident



An investigation into a collision between an overturned truck-tractor semitrailer and a motorcoach in which five people were killed and 36 injured uncovered numerous safety deficiencies including defective and out-of-adjustment brakes on the motorcoach.

The accident happened just before 2 A.M. on October 16, 2005, when a truck-tractor semitrailer traveling on I-94 near Osseo, Wisconsin, departed the right-hand lane and traveled along the earthen roadside before re-entering the highway where it overturned. It came to rest on its side and blocked both westbound lanes. About a minute later, a chartered 55-passenger motorcoach, carrying members of a high school band, and traveling at highway speeds, crashed into the underside of the overturned truck.

In its final report on the accident, the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) said the driver of the truck-tractor semitrailer was fatigued and fell asleep at the wheel because he did not use his off-duty time to obtain sufficient sleep to safely operate the vehicle. The NTSB also found other safety shortcomings involved in the accident.

After the accident, NTSB investigators found that two of the six brakes on

the motorcoach were defective and out-of-adjustment. Both were on the drive axle and had automatic slack adjusters that dated to the motorcoach's original manufacture indicating that they had been in use for more than 12 years. Investigators determined that the out-of-adjustment condition would have placed the motorcoach out of service according to CVSA criteria.

Four months before the accident the Wisconsin Department of Transportation placed the motorcoach out of service because the drive axle brakes were out of adjustment. The NTSB report said the motorcoach company attempted to solve the problem by manually adjusting the automatic slack adjusters. However, the NTSB said automatic adjusters should be manually adjusted only as a temporary measure to correct the adjustment in an emergency, because this procedure usually does not fix the underlying problem, making it probable that the brakes will soon be out of adjustment again. In this case, the motorcoach's brakes most likely went out of adjustment shortly after the manual adjustment and remained so until the accident.

The NTSB's report noted that in June 2007, CVSA updated information on automatic slack adjusters in Module 6

of the North American Standard Inspection training materials, but the NTSB said it is still concerned that brakes with automatic slack adjusters are still being manually adjusted. "Drivers and motor carriers need to be reminded that automatic slack adjusters should only be manually adjusted at installation or under emergency conditions and that manually adjusting slack adjusters does not fix the underlying problem with the brakes," the NTSB report said.

The NTSB report concluded that the two out-of-adjustment brakes, diminished the braking force available to slow the motorcoach but this condition likely did not contribute to the accident.

As a result of the accident, the NTSB is urging FMCSA to develop and implement a plan to deploy technologies to reduce fatigue-related accidents, and to continually assess the effectiveness of the fatigue management plans implemented by motor carriers, including their ability to improve sleep and alertness, mitigate performance errors, and prevent incidents and accidents.

The NTSB also wants the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration to determine whether equipping commercial vehicles with collision warning systems with active braking and electronic stability control systems will reduce accidents, and if effective

The full report can be found on the NTSB website: [www.nts.gov](http://www.nts.gov).

*Editor's Note: CVSA's Guardian ran a story earlier about an accident in Glen Rock, PA, that focused on dangers of manually adjusting automatic slack adjusters (Third Quarter 2006, pages 8 and 9); and comments from Roger Simonson (First Quarter, 2007, page 3).*

## Ticketing Aggressive Cars and Trucks – State Peer Exchange Network (T-SPEN) Members Recognized

The Ticketing Aggressive Cars and Trucks (TACT) State Peer Exchange Network (T-SPEN) is a group of state law enforcement representatives and traffic safety stakeholders who are sharing their experience and knowledge in developing, conducting and evaluating TACT programs with other interested states. TACT is an innovative enforcement approach that focuses on reducing crashes between passenger vehicles and large trucks and buses.

The founding state members of T-SPEN were recognized by FMCSA Administrator John H. Hill at a TACT Forum held July 2008 in Las Vegas, NV.

For more information about TACT and the State Peer Exchange Network, visit [www.fmcsa.dot.gov/tact](http://www.fmcsa.dot.gov/tact), or contact Gladys Cole, FMCSA TACT Program Director, at [tactinfo@dot.gov](mailto:tactinfo@dot.gov).



*Pictured: T-SPEN members — (front row, left to right) Maj. Wayne Beck, Georgia Department of Public Safety; Lt. Kevin Zeller, Washington State Patrol; Myra Beckers, North Carolina State Highway Patrol; Capt. George Gray, North Carolina State Highway Patrol; (back row, left to right): Maj. Christopher Long, Georgia Department of Public Safety; Penny Nerup, Washington Traffic Safety Commission; Lt. Raymond Cook, Pennsylvania State Police. Not pictured: Jan Childers, Georgia Department of Public Safety; Thad Sullivan, Kentucky Vehicle Enforcement.*

## FMCSA Posts Safety Belt Technology Countermeasures Study

FMCSA has posted on its website a recently completed study on the topic of commercial motor vehicle (CMV) driver safety belt technology countermeasures.

The study examined four promising technologies designed to increase the use of safety belts by CMV drivers: (1) enhanced audible reminder systems; (2) brightly colored safety belts; (3) safety belt tension adjusters; and (4) seat-integrated safety restraint systems. Of these four, the study concluded that brightly colored safety belts and enhanced audible reminders were the most cost-effective approaches.

Under Section 392.16 of the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Regulations (FMCSR), a CMV which has a seat belt assembly installed at the driver's seat shall not be driven unless the driver has properly restrained himself/herself with the seat belt assembly.

As noted in the study, however, CMVs are currently excluded from the Code of Federal Regulations - Part 571, Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standard - Number 208, which requires that all passenger vehicles be equipped with both visual and audible seatbelt reminder systems.

A copy of the report can be obtained by visiting [www.fmcsa.dot.gov/safety-security/safety-belt/index.htm](http://www.fmcsa.dot.gov/safety-security/safety-belt/index.htm).



## FMCSA's McMurray Honored

Rose A. McMurray, chief safety officer and assistant administrator for the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration, has been named a 2008 recipient of the "Distinguished Service to Safety Award" by the National Safety Council. It is the highest honor bestowed on an individual safety professional by the Council in recognition of outstanding service to the field of safety and health. The award was presented during the Council's 96th Annual Congress and Expo held in September in Anaheim, California.

