



NTSB

Highway Report Summary

Gray Summit, Missouri: Multivehicle Collision Interstate 44 Eastbound



Distraction and inattention to the road ahead cause three collisions

WHAT HAPPENED: This accident consisted of three consecutive collisions in a slowed down traffic queue. A GMC pickup truck merged into the right lane and struck the rear of a Volvo truck-tractor with no trailer. Two school buses were approaching the slowed traffic and the collision ahead, and the lead bus struck the rear of the pickup truck, causing it to overturn onto the back of the tractor. The front of the lead bus came to rest on top of the GMC pickup and the Volvo tractor. Finally, the following bus struck the lead bus.

MAIN FINDINGS: It is likely that the GMC pickup truck driver was distracted by a text messaging conversation at or near the time of the accident. The pickup truck driver was also fatigued at the time of the accident, due to cumulative sleep debt and acute sleep loss, which could have resulted in performance decrements. The collision between the lead school bus and the GMC pickup was the result of the bus driver's attention being drawn away from the forward roadway by a motorcoach parked on the shoulder, which it passed moments before the collision. Had the driver of the following school bus maintained the recommended minimum distance from the lead school bus, she would have been able to avoid the accident. The use of video event recorder data for managing driver behavior could assist school bus operators in identifying driver performance issues before they lead to accidents. Forward collision warning systems on the two accident buses—and possibly on the GMC pickup—could have prevented the accident or at least mitigated its severity.

PROBABLE CAUSE: The National Transportation Safety Board determines that the probable cause of the initial Gray Summit collision was distraction, likely due to a text messaging conversation being conducted by the GMC pickup driver, which resulted in his failure to notice and react to a Volvo tractor that had slowed or stopped in response to a queue that had developed in a work zone. The second collision, between the lead school bus and the GMC pickup, was the result of the bus driver's inattention to the forward roadway due to excessive focus on a motorcoach parked on the shoulder of the road. The final collision was due to the driver of the following school bus not maintaining the recommended minimum distance from the lead school bus in the seconds preceding the accident. Contributing to the severity of the accident was the lack of forward collision warning systems on the two school buses.

LOCATION

Gray Summit, Missouri

DATE / TIME

August 5, 2010 / 10:11 am

VEHICLE(s)

2007 Volvo truck-tractor with no trailer
2007 GMC Sierra extended cab pickup truck
2003 Blue Bird Bus (Lead School Bus)
2001 Blue Bird Bus (Following School Bus)

FATALITIES / INJURIES / EJECTIONS

2 Fatal
5 Serious, 33 Minor, 18 Uninjured
0 Ejections

You should know:

Portable electronic devices should not be used while driving.

Technology developers should be encouraged to create a feature to disable the non-emergency use of cell phones by drivers.

The situation of a single occupant having to manually hold open the emergency exit window could delay school bus evacuation.

The full report can be found at: <http://www.nts.gov/schoolbuses>