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.
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