



# **PRELIMINARY REPORT**

## **HIGHWAY**

### **HWY20FH003**

*The information in this report is preliminary and will be supplemented or corrected during the course of the investigation.*

About 10:23 a.m. Pacific standard time (PST) on Saturday, February 22, 2020, a 2014 Freightliner chassis configured with a General Coach America 30-passenger coach body (hereafter “the bus”) was southbound on Interstate Highway 15 (I-15) in Pala Mesa, San Diego County, California. The bus was operated by Executive Lines, Inc. and was occupied by the driver and 20 passengers.<sup>1</sup> The bus was en route from El Monte, California, to San Ysidro, California, with stops in Baldwin Park, Pomona, Riverside, and Temecula. As the bus crossed the bridge over the San Luis Rey River and Dulin Road, it departed the roadway to the west, overturned, and slid down an embankment, coming to rest on its roof.

During the crash sequence, five passengers were ejected from the bus. The crash resulted in fatal injuries to three passengers and injuries ranging from serious to minor to 17 passengers and the driver. Investigators interviewed the driver and 15 of the 17 surviving passengers.

In the area of the crash, southbound I-15 is an eight-lane divided highway with the northbound and southbound lanes separated by an approximately 70-foot-wide depressed earthen median and median barrier. The posted maximum speed limit is 70 mph. In the area of the San Luis Rey River/Dulin Road bridge, I-15 southbound gradually ascends and curves slightly to the left.

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<sup>1</sup> The company also did business under the name Líneas Ejecutivas, Inc.



**Figure 1.** The bus at final rest (Source: California Highway Patrol).



**Figure 2.** Front/left view of the bus in the tow yard.

The passenger seats in the bus were equipped with three-point (lap and shoulder) restraints. The driver and one passenger were correctly using the restraints, but at least two passengers told investigators that they believed the belts were two-point (lap only) restraints and were using them as such.

Weather observations from Fallbrook Community Airpark (KL18), located 5 miles west-northwest of the crash site, indicated 4 miles visibility with moderate rain at the crash time. Between 9:55 a.m. and 10:15 a.m. PST, 0.08 inches of precipitation fell at KL18, with an additional 0.01 inches falling there between 10:15 a.m. and 10:35 a.m. PST.

A postcrash mechanical inspection of the bus was performed, and all major vehicle systems are being examined as of the date of this report. The vehicle's engine control module was downloaded by the California Highway Patrol; the data from that device are still being analyzed. The bus was not equipped with video recording devices.

Executive Lines, Inc. has been in business since 1997 and runs a regular shuttle service from the Los Angeles area to San Ysidro. The company was rated "satisfactory" in its last three California terminal reviews.<sup>2</sup> The driver was in compliance with applicable hours-of-service regulations at the time of the crash.

The National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) will continue to collect and analyze data, including all pertinent information in the areas of human performance; survival factors; and highway, vehicle, and motor carrier operations. All aspects of the crash remain under investigation as the NTSB determines the probable cause with the intent of issuing safety recommendations to prevent similar crashes. The NTSB is working alongside the California Highway Patrol, which is conducting a separate, parallel investigation.

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<sup>2</sup> The terminal review is conducted by the California Highway Patrol every 13 months and evaluates motor carriers based on their preventive maintenance program, the condition of their regulated vehicles, their hours of service/time records, and, if applicable, their compliance with hazardous materials regulations. Carriers are rated either "satisfactory" or "unsatisfactory."