



PRELIMINARY REPORT

HIGHWAY

HWY20FH006

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

On Friday, June 12, 2020, about 6:45 a.m. central daylight time, a 2013 Freightliner truck-tractor in combination with a 2017 Utility semitrailer was traveling north on Interstate 94 (I-94) in the Township of Arlington, Columbia County, Wisconsin. A traffic queue had formed from two earlier crashes about 2 miles north near exit 119. The first crash occurred at 3:31 a.m., when a truck-tractor and semitrailer combination unit, traveling north on I-94, stopped on the right shoulder near mile marker 119. Another truck-tractor semitrailer combination unit, traveling north in the far right lane, drifted toward the shoulder and sideswiped the stopped combination unit.

Two Wisconsin State Patrol (WSP) officers and a Columbia County worker were attending to the first crash. One of the WSP vehicles was parked in the right lane, with its emergency lights on. A flare pattern had been set up to divert traffic from the right lane. The second crash occurred at 4:51 a.m., when a straight truck traveling north in the right lane collided with the parked WSP patrol car.¹ The WSP officers and the county worker were seriously injured by crash debris. The truck driver had minor injuries.

A third crash, involving multiple vehicles, occurred about 6:45 a.m. It began when the northbound 2013 Freightliner struck a 2021 Kia at the end of the traffic queue. That crash led to collisions with a 2006 Volkswagen sedan, a 1999 Chevrolet sedan, a 2018 Ford pickup, a 2018 Mack dump truck, a 2020 Peterbilt truck-tractor in combination with a 2014 Utility semitrailer, and a 2020 Volvo truck-tractor in combination with a 2007 Utility semitrailer (figures 1 and 2). As a result of the multiple-vehicle crash, 4 people died, including the driver of the 2013 Freightliner and 4 people were injured; 1 person was not injured. The posted speed limit near the crash site is 70 mph.

¹ A traffic incident management plan was implemented immediately after the second crash. The Wisconsin Department of Transportation displayed "Freeway Closed 15 Miles Ahead Expect Severe Delays" on a variable message sign in advance of a portable changeable message sign displaying "Accident Scene Ahead, Be Prepared to Stop," in advance of signs displaying "Emergency Scene Ahead" that were placed before the traffic queue and the two crash scenes. The 2013 Freightliner drove past all the warning signs before crashing into the traffic queue.



Figure 1. Aerial view of crash scene. (Source: Wisconsin State Patrol)



Figure 2. Final rest of (left) 2020 Peterbilt truck-tractor in combination with 2014 Utility semitrailer; (center) 2018 Mack dump truck, 2013 Freightliner truck-tractor in combination with 2017 Utility semitrailer, and 2006 Volkswagen; and (right) 2021 Kia. (Source: Wisconsin State Patrol)

The National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) investigation of this crash focuses on the driver of the 2013 Freightliner, occupant protection, and vehicle performance. The Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration, the WSP, and the Wisconsin Department of Transportation are parties to the investigation.

All aspects of the crash remain under investigation, as the NTSB works to determine the probable cause and continues to examine the related safety issues. The NTSB is working alongside the WSP, which is conducting a separate, parallel investigation.