

**NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD**  
**Virtual Meeting of December 1, 2020**  
**(Information subject to editing)**

**Collision Between Pickup Truck with Trailer and Group of Motorcycles**  
**Randolph, New Hampshire**  
**June 21, 2019**  
**HWY19MH010**

This is a synopsis from the NTSB's report and does not include the Board's rationale for the conclusions, probable cause, and safety recommendations. NTSB staff is currently making final revisions to the report from which the attached conclusions and safety recommendations have been extracted. The final report and pertinent safety recommendation letters will be distributed to recommendation recipients as soon as possible. The attached information is subject to further review and editing to reflect changes adopted during the Board meeting.

## **Executive Summary**

About 6:26 p.m. eastern daylight time on Friday, June 21, 2019, a 2016 Ram 2500 Tradesman crew-cab pickup truck towing an unladen 2015 Quality vehicle-hauling trailer, operated by Westfield Transport Incorporated and driven by a 23-year-old male, was traveling west on US Route 2 (US-2) in Randolph, Coos County, New Hampshire. The combination vehicle had left its last delivery stop in Gorham, New Hampshire, about 17 minutes earlier, and was en route to West Springfield, Massachusetts.

A group of 15 motorcycles—carrying 15 riders and 7 passengers—traveling in staggered formation had just entered the eastbound lane of US-2 from a driveway opposite the intersection with Valley Road. In this area, US-2 is a two-lane road that is divided by a double yellow centerline and has a speed limit of 50 mph.

About 1,100 feet east of Valley Road, the combination vehicle, which had crossed the centerline, collided with the motorcycle leading the staggered formation and then struck another motorcycle. The vehicle then continued in a sharper leftward arc, colliding with four additional motorcycles, before coming to rest on an earthen embankment along the eastbound shoulder. A postcrash fire ensued that enveloped the pickup truck and two of the motorcycles. Five motorcycle riders and two passengers died in the crash, and an additional five riders and two passengers were injured. The pickup truck driver was not injured.

## **Safety Issues**

The investigation identified the following safety issues:

- ***Deficiencies in out-of-state driver's license notification processing.*** At the time of the crash, the Massachusetts Registry of Motor Vehicles (RMV) had serious deficiencies in processing out-of-state notifications, which led to the RMV's failure to revoke the commercial driver's license (CDL) of the pickup truck driver as well as the driver's

licenses of thousands of non-CDL drivers in Massachusetts. After the Randolph crash, the RMV made considerable operational and management changes. The report explores the RMV's deficiencies that led to the crash, the postcrash changes, and the extent to which the problems observed in Massachusetts exist nationwide.

- ***Insufficient federal oversight of motor carriers.*** Westfield Transport was a very unsafe motor carrier that failed to complete even the most fundamental task a motor carrier is required to accomplish—to ensure that it employs properly qualified drivers. The carrier's managers and drivers also routinely tampered with electronic logging devices (ELDs) and falsified hours-of-service logs. Examination of Westfield Transport's history showed limitations in the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) oversight of carriers that are recent graduates of the agency's new entrant program. The report explores Westfield Transport deficiencies that led to the crash, and the FMCSA's oversight of motor carriers who recently completed the new entrant program, its oversight of ELD providers, and its use of imminent hazard orders.
- ***Shortcomings in motorcycle rider safety.*** Four of the motorcycles in the Randolph crash were equipped with an antilock braking system (ABS), which would have helped the riders maintain stability while emergency braking. However, the technology is not required equipment on new motorcycles. In addition, several of the motorcycle riders had alcohol in their blood, and a few riders and passengers were not wearing a US Department of Transportation (USDOT)-compliant helmet at the time of the crash. Because the riders entered the roadway mere seconds before the crash, the spacing between the motorcycles in the still-developing staggered formation was very tight. The report explores (1) the impact of ABS on the motorcycles in this crash and the overall safety benefit of such technology on an entire motorcycle fleet, (2) the overall safety of wearing USDOT-compliant helmets, and (3) the risks of alcohol impairment and inadequate spacing between motorcycles while riding in groups.

## Findings

1. None of the following were factors in the crash: (1) driving experience of the pickup truck driver and motorcycle riders; (2) cell-phone distraction by the pickup truck driver; (3) mechanical condition of the combination vehicle and the motorcycles; (4) highway design; and (5) weather conditions.
2. The emergency response to the crash was timely and appropriate.
3. The pickup truck driver's crossing of the centerline occurred because of his impairment from use of multiple drugs.
4. Due to systemic deficiencies in the Massachusetts Registry of Motor Vehicles (RMV) operations and inaction to rectify a known problem, the RMV failed to revoke the pickup truck driver's commercial driver's license (CDL) as well as the licenses of many non-CDL Massachusetts drivers with infractions or suspensions in other states.

5. Had the Massachusetts Registry of Motor Vehicles had effective systems in place to promptly revoke driver's licenses based on out-of-state notifications, the pickup truck driver's license would have been revoked before the Randolph crash.
6. Postcrash system changes by the Massachusetts Registry of Motor Vehicles (RMV) represent progress toward addressing the substantial deficiencies in RMV operations that existed at the time of the crash.
7. If the postcrash system changes by the Massachusetts Registry of Motor Vehicles are maintained, they would reduce the likelihood of drivers with a history of impaired driving retaining a Massachusetts driver's license.
8. Considering the problems uncovered in Massachusetts and neighboring states, the process for revoking the licenses of commercial driver's license (CDL) and non-CDL drivers with disqualifying offenses could be greatly enhanced by improving interstate communication, including promptly sending notifications to other states and expeditiously processing incoming out-of-state notifications.
9. By failing to conduct an appropriate background check and safety history on the pickup truck driver, Westfield Transport exhibited a substantial disregard for federal motor carrier safety regulations, resulting in hiring and employing a driver with significant safety risks.
10. Westfield Transport's egregious noncompliance with federal motor carrier safety regulations and its actions to conceal its deceptive practices indicate a motor carrier without regard for safety.
11. Although the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration's new entrant safety assurance program functioned as designed and did not detect violations by Westfield Transport during the probationary period that merited an expedited action, the program—due to its inherent limitations—could not predict Westfield Transport's subsequent unsafe operation.
12. Recent graduates of the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration's new entrant safety assurance program that exhibit a dramatic increase in roadside inspections and subsequent violations demonstrate that the safety of their operation has been compromised.
13. Based on two recent National Transportation Safety Board investigations in which drivers were able to easily manipulate KeepTruckin logging devices to falsify hours of service, these devices do not appear to be in compliance with federal regulations.
14. By deciding not to issue an imminent hazard order against Westfield Transport, the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration missed an opportunity to improve safety by preventing the carrier's owner, manager, and drivers from continuing their unsafe practices, possibly with the same vehicles, by reincarnating into other carriers.

15. The Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration inconsistently applies imminent hazard orders, which can be an effective tool for removing unsafe motor carriers from service and preventing owners, managers, and drivers from continuing their unsafe practices, frequently with the same vehicles, by reincarnating into other carriers.
16. The antilock braking systems on four of the motorcycles likely aided those riders in performing emergency braking during the crash sequence.
17. Because antilock braking systems can aid motorcycle riders when braking in emergency situations, broad deployment of the technology would reduce the crash risk for motorcycle riders.
18. Although the effectiveness of helmet use in this crash for each motorcyclist could not be conclusively determined, US Department of Transportation (USDOT)-compliant helmets have been shown to provide the best protection for motorcyclists when a crash occurs, and state universal helmet-use laws increase the use of USDOT-compliant helmets in those states.
19. Although the lead rider was impaired by alcohol, the extent to which his impairment impeded his ability to execute an evasive maneuver could not be determined.
20. Although alcohol impairment increases a motorcycle rider's response time to a potential hazard, the rapid progression of impacts in this crash along with the tight spacing made it unlikely for most riders behind the lead motorcycle to be able to avoid the oncoming pickup truck.

## **Probable Cause**

The National Transportation Safety Board determines that the probable cause of the Randolph, New Hampshire, crash was the pickup truck driver's crossing the centerline and encroaching into the oncoming lane of travel, which occurred because of his impairment from use of multiple drugs. Contributing to the crash was Westfield Transport's substantial disregard for and egregious noncompliance with safety regulations. Also contributing was the failure of the Massachusetts Registry of Motor Vehicles to revoke the pickup truck driver's Massachusetts driver's license when notified of his loss of driving privileges in another state.

## **Recommendations**

### **New Recommendations**

#### **To the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration:**

1. Establish an additional layer of oversight of recent graduates of your new entrant safety assurance program that has a lower tolerance for unsafe operations.
2. Remove KeepTruckin electronic logging devices from the list of approved providers until the company has demonstrated compliance with federal regulations.

3. Review and revise the certification process by which your agency approves electronic logging device providers to ensure that products meet federal regulations.

**To the Massachusetts Department of Transportation:**

4. Develop appropriate metrics and establish a process to regularly evaluate the effectiveness of the Registry of Motor Vehicles' processing of out-of-state notifications, both incoming and outgoing, for commercial driver's license (CDL) and non-CDL holders.

**To the Department of Transportation in 49 states—Massachusetts excepted—and the District of Columbia and the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico:**

5. Direct your state licensing agencies to review existing procedures or develop new ones to accurately and expeditiously (1) process notifications received from other states about infractions and suspensions committed by the home state's drivers in those jurisdictions, and (2) notify other jurisdictions of infractions and suspensions committed in the home state by drivers licensed in those jurisdictions.

**To the National Association of State Motorcycle Safety Administrators and the Motorcycle Safety Foundation:**

6. Inform your members about this crash and remind them about the safety benefits of wearing US Department of Transportation-compliant helmets, safe spacing when riding in groups, riding unimpaired, and antilock braking system-equipped motorcycles.

**Recommendations Reiterated in this Report**

**To the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration:**

Require all new motorcycles manufactured for on-road use in the United States be equipped with antilock braking system technology. (H-18-32)

**To the three states with no motorcycle helmet laws (Illinois, Iowa, and New Hampshire):**

Require that all persons shall wear a Department of Transportation Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standard 218-compliant motorcycle helmet while riding (operating), or as a passenger on any motorcycle. (H-07-38)

**To the 27 states/commonwealths and one territory with partial motorcycle helmet laws (Alaska, Arizona, Arkansas, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, Florida, Hawaii, Idaho, Indiana, Kansas, Maine, Minnesota, Montana, New Mexico, North Dakota, Ohio, Oklahoma, Rhode Island, South Carolina, South Dakota, Texas, Utah, Wisconsin, and Wyoming; the commonwealths of Kentucky and Pennsylvania; and the territory of Guam):**

Amend current laws to require that all persons shall wear a Department of Transportation Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standard 218-compliant motorcycle helmet while riding (operating), or as a passenger on any motorcycle. (H-07-39)

**To the seven states/commonwealths, the District of Columbia, and two territories with universal motorcycle helmet laws/regulations not specifically requiring FMVSS 218-compliant helmets (Alabama, Maryland, Michigan, Mississippi, Nevada, and West Virginia; the commonwealth of Virginia; the District of Columbia; and the territories of Northern Mariana Islands and the Virgin Islands of the United States):**

Amend current laws to specify that all persons shall wear a Department of Transportation Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standard 218-compliant motorcycle helmet while riding (operating), or as a passenger on any motorcycle. (H-07-40)

#### **Previously Issued Recommendation Reiterated and Classified in this Report**

The National Transportation Safety Board also reiterates and classifies the following safety recommendation “Open—Unacceptable Response”:

#### **To the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration:**

Review the process and procedures for imminent hazard orders to identify ways in which this process can be improved to work more swiftly and effectively; when implementing the improvements, seek legislative authority for such changes as necessary. (H-16-1)