



National Transportation Safety Board
Washington, D.C. 20594

Highway Accident Brief

Accident No.: HWY-98-SH-018
Accident Type: Rear-end collision
Location: Bothell, Washington
Date and Time: February 17, 1998; 4:00 p.m.
Vehicle 1 (V1): 1990 White/Volvo tractor with a double semitrailer hauling lumber
Vehicles 2–7 (V2–V7): 1994 Dodge Ram van, 2 passenger cars, 2 pickup trucks, and 1 tractor-semi-trailer
Fatalities/Injuries: 3 fatalities, 7 minor injuries

Accident Description

The driver of the tractor-double semitrailer stated that she noticed traffic on Interstate Highway 405 slowing in front of her and began applying the brakes. She then noticed the air pressure for the brake system depleting rapidly. The tractor-double semitrailer subsequently rear-ended the first vehicle stopped in traffic ahead, a Dodge van, pushing it into five other vehicles. (See figure 1.) The tractor-double semitrailer and van erupted in fire. Three van occupants were fatally injured; seven others involved in the collision sustained minor injuries.

State/Federal Oversight

Washington has adopted the *Federal Motor Carrier Safety Regulations* with variances; none of the variances were pertinent to the carrier or driver at the time of the accident. The U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) conducted a compliance review in April 1991, giving the carrier an unsatisfactory rating for deficiencies in compliance with general regulations (Part 390), driver qualifications (Part 391), reporting of accidents (Part 394), and hours-of-service regulations (Part 391). DOT conducted another compliance review in 1992; the carrier received an overall satisfactory rating with a conditional rating for hours-of-service compliance.

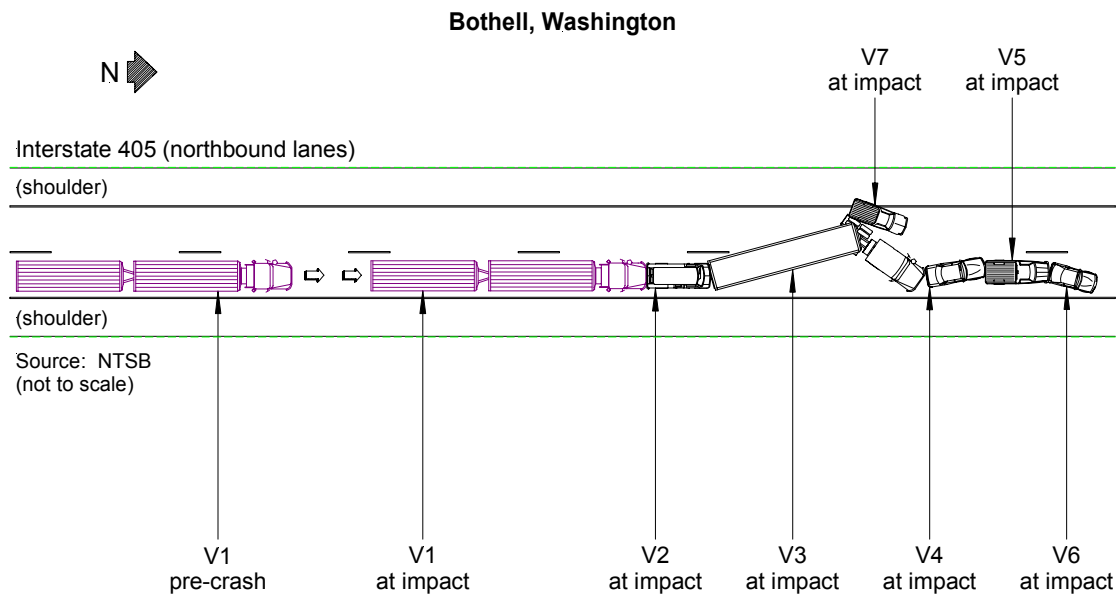


Figure 1. Accident diagram.

Probable Cause

The National Transportation Safety Board determines that the probable cause of the accident was the inability of the truckdriver to stop for traffic because of inoperable truck brakes.

Adopted: September 17, 2002