



National Transportation Safety Board

Washington, D.C. 20594

Highway Accident Brief

Accident No.: HWY-98-SH-009
Accident Type: Highway-rail grade crossing collision
Location: Garden City, Georgia
Date and Time: October 9, 1997; 7:12 a.m.
Vehicle 1 (V1): 1991 Navistar with empty gooseneck lowbed semitrailer
Vehicle 2 (V2): Freight train
Injuries: 1 serious, 11 minor injuries

Accident Description

The truckdriver stated that as he approached the high-vertical profile (hump), passive railroad grade crossing, he noticed the hump but thought his truck could make it across. As he eased the truck across the track, according to the truckdriver, he felt resistance but continued until the truck became stuck. The truckdriver said that he immediately called 911 on the cellular phone and reported his location and situation. Garden City police arrived at the crossing at 6:50 a.m. and notified the CSX Transportation (CSXT) dispatcher at 6:52 a.m. of the truck's location at the Hawkinsville Road crossing. The CSXT dispatcher was unable to locate the crossing and notify the train of the situation. At 7:12 a.m., an Amtrak train struck the lowbed semitrailer. (See figure 1.) The truckdriver's license had been suspended, and he was in violation of the 70-hour rule¹ (time records revealed that he had been on duty for 79 1/2 hours). The truckdriver tested positive for cocaine metabolites just after the accident.

State/Federal Oversight

Georgia has 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. The motor carrier had never received a compliance review from the U.S. Department of Transportation or from Georgia. Following the accident, the Georgia Public Service Commission conducted a compliance review and found several deficiencies in record maintenance, preemployment checks, random drug testing, hours of service, and daily vehicle inspection reporting.

¹ The 70-hour rule limits drivers to 70 hours of working-driving time within 8 consecutive days (49 *Code of Federal Regulations* Part 395.3).

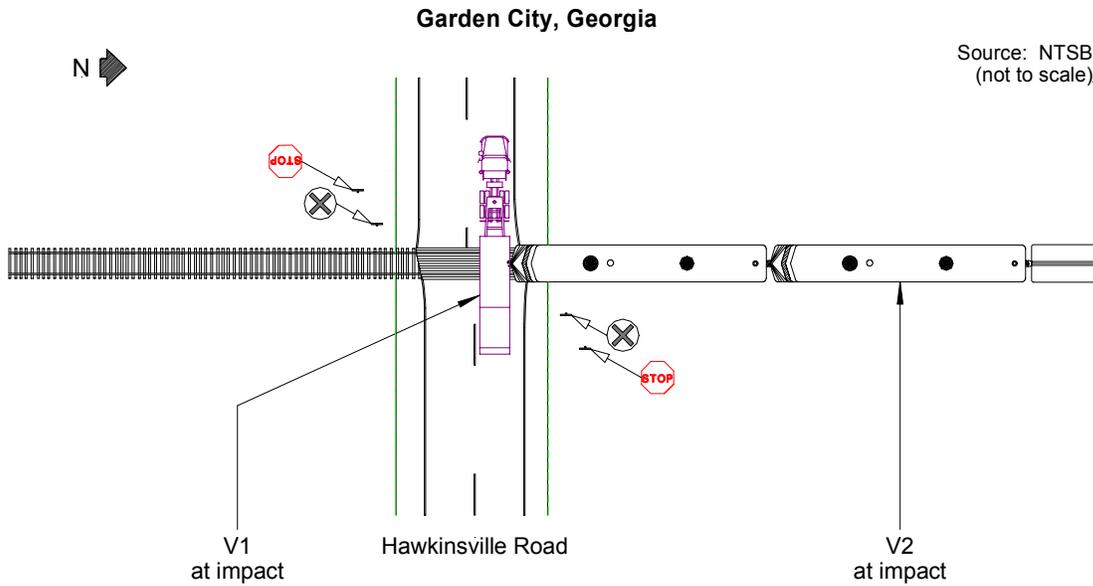


Figure 1. Accident diagram.

Probable Cause

The National Transportation Safety Board determines that the probable cause of the accident was the driver's poor judgment in traversing a hump grade crossing with a lowbed semitrailer. Contributing to the truckdriver's poor judgment may have been impairment due to fatigue or withdrawal from cocaine, resulting in depression or fatigue. Also contributing to the accident was the failure of the CSXT dispatcher to locate the grade crossing and notify the train crew of the situation.

Adopted: September 17, 2002