



PRELIMINARY REPORT

HIGHWAY

HWY18MH007

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

About 1:49 p.m. (local time) on Thursday, March 1, 2018, a multivehicle collision occurred in partially stopped traffic on eastbound Interstate 290 (I-290) near milepost 14.9, in Elmhurst, Cook County, Illinois. In this area, the roadway consists of three travel lanes and paved shoulders in both directions of travel. A concrete barrier separates the eastbound and westbound lanes. The posted speed limit is 55 mph.

The initial impact occurred between a 2016 Kenworth truck-tractor semitrailer combination unit (vehicle 1) and a 2004 Chrysler Sebring (vehicle 2). The Kenworth truck—operated by Pioneer Transportation Ltd., of Merrill, Wisconsin—was traveling in the right lane when it collided with the Chrysler, pushing it into the rear of a 2013 International truck (vehicle 3) operated by New Pro-Freight Inc., of South Holland, Illinois.¹

As a result of the rear impact, the New Pro-Freight truck moved forward and collided with the rear of a 2009 Peterbilt truck (vehicle 4), operated by Schneider National Carriers Inc., of Green Bay, Wisconsin.² This collision pushed the semitrailer of the New Pro-Freight truck into the center and left lanes, causing it to collide with a 2016 Subaru Outback (vehicle 5), which was traveling in the left lane. As a result, the Subaru struck a 2016 Ford Explorer (vehicle 6). A 2018 Toyota Sienna (vehicle 7) then struck the Subaru and Chrysler, before rolling backward to final rest.

The Chrysler came to rest in the center lane between the New Pro-Freight semitrailer and the Pioneer truck-tractor, where a postcrash fire ensued, which consumed the Chrysler (see figure below). The New Pro-Freight semitrailer, Pioneer truck, Subaru, and Toyota also sustained fire damage. Each of the seven vehicles was occupied by a driver only. The driver of the Chrysler died, while the remaining six drivers sustained minor injuries.



Scene views of six of the vehicles at final rest on eastbound I-290.

According to data obtained from various vehicle recording modules, the New Pro-Freight truck was stopped, and the Toyota was traveling 52 mph just prior to the crash.³ Additional data sources are being examined. When interviewed, the Schneider truck driver reported that he was stopped at the time of the crash, the Subaru and Ford drivers reported traveling 50–55 mph, and the Pioneer truck driver stated that he did not recall the crash event.

The NTSB is gathering various records regarding the Pioneer truck driver’s medical certification and use of portable electronic devices. Initial toxicology results received by the Illinois State Police were negative for alcohol and other drugs. Further testing for prescription and other impairing drugs is underway. Preliminary information suggests that the Pioneer driver was operating within the regulated hours of service, having been on duty for just over 5 hours at the time of the crash.⁴ No mechanical defects were identified in the detailed inspection of the Pioneer truck-tractor and semitrailer. Similar information regarding driver qualifications, hours of service, and vehicle maintenance is being gathered for the other two commercial motor carriers involved in the crash.

The NTSB is also evaluating the highway and associated signage. The crash occurred just south of the St. Charles Road interchange, near the end of the acceleration lane from St. Charles Road onto I-290, a metered on-ramp. The crash location is between major interchanges with Interstate 294 and Interstate 88. This area regularly experiences traffic congestion, with an average daily traffic volume of 134,000 vehicles, 13 percent of which are trucks.⁵ On approach to the crash site, about 2 miles north of St. Charles Road, a guide sign reads “TRUCKS USE 2 RIGHT LANES.”

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 Illinois State Police, the Illinois Department of Transportation, and the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration to compile a complete and accurate account of the crash.

¹ The Pioneer combination unit consisted of 2016 Kenworth truck-tractor in combination with a 2012 Wabash enclosed van semitrailer. The New Pro-Freight combination unit consisted of 2013 International truck-tractor in combination with a 1996 Strick chassis semitrailer with an intermodal container.

² The Schneider combination unit consisted of 2009 Peterbilt truck-tractor in combination with a 2014 Wabash enclosed van semitrailer.

³ (a) The New Pro-Freight truck-tractor was equipped with an engine control module that captured the crash event in a last stop record, noting a vehicle speed of 0 mph and a forward acceleration not initiated under vehicle throttle. (b) The Toyota air bag control module captured the crash event in a nondeployment mode, recording an initial speed of 52.8 mph, which was reduced to 12.4 mph under a brake application just prior to the crash. The data for the crash event also noted that the driver seat belt was buckled.

⁴ A property-carrying commercial motor vehicle driver can be on-duty for 14 hours, driving for 11 hours, given prior off-duty time, breaks, and other conditions, as outlined in 49 *Code of Federal Regulations* 395.3.

⁵ According to a 2017 average daily traffic report provided by the Illinois Department of Transportation.