



PRELIMINARY REPORT

HIGHWAY

HWY19MH007

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

On Thursday, January 3, 2019, about 3:41 p.m., eastern standard time, a 2016 Freightliner truck-tractor in combination with a semitrailer was traveling north on Interstate 75 (I-75) in Gainesville, Florida, when it struck a 2016 Acura passenger car that was also traveling north. At this location, near milepost 393, I-75 is a divided highway with three lanes traveling in each direction, separated by an earthen median and a median barrier. The posted speed limit is 70 mph. The Freightliner continued to the left along with the redirected Acura, crashed through a w-beam median barrier, crossed the center median, and entered the southbound lanes—striking a 2006 Chevrolet 12-passenger van (figure 1). After impact, the van rolled over twice before coming to rest upright. A 2006 Chevrolet pickup truck was also damaged during this segment of the crash event.



Figure 1. Screen shot from Garmin forward-facing video camera, showing the 2016 Freightliner entering southbound lanes, at upper left. Passenger van is traveling in left lane and pickup truck in center lane. Redirected Acura traveling alongside truck is not visible. (Source: 2018 Freightliner Garmin dezlCam 785L-MT-S)

The 2016 Freightliner continued across the southbound lanes and struck a 2018 Freightliner truck-tractor semitrailer that was traveling in the far-right lane, at which point the unbelted driver of the 2016 Freightliner was ejected. A postcrash fire ignited, fed by fuel from a breached saddle tank on the 2016 Freightliner. The driver of the passenger car self-extricated before her vehicle, which was entangled with the 2016 Freightliner, was fully engulfed in flames. Figure 2 shows an aerial view of the crash site.



Figure 2. Aerial view of crash scene with vehicles at final rest. (Source: Florida Highway Patrol)

Five vehicles with a total of 16 occupants were involved in the crash. Five occupants of the van were wearing their available lap/shoulder belts—including three who were ultimately ejected from the vehicle. The driver and front seat passenger were restrained with lap/shoulder belts and were not ejected. The drivers of the passenger car, the 2018 Freightliner, and the pickup truck were all wearing their lap/shoulder belts at the time of the crash. Seven of the 16 vehicle occupants were fatally injured, including the two Freightliner drivers and five passengers ejected from the van. Of the remaining nine vehicle occupants, only the driver of the pickup truck was uninjured.

The 2016 Freightliner driver held a commercial driver's license that expired in February 2022. His medical certificate was current until February 2020. Preliminary information suggests that he was operating within the regulated hours of service.

All aspects of the Gainesville, Florida, 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 Florida Highway Patrol, which is conducting a separate, parallel investigation.