



PRELIMINARY REPORT HIGHWAY HWY16MH019

*The information in this preliminary report is subject to change and may contain errors.
It will be supplemented or corrected during the course of the investigation.*

About 5:16 a.m. eastern daylight time on Saturday, July 2, 2016, a 1979 Blue Bird bus was traveling south on State Road 363 (SR-363), also referred to as Woodville Highway, near St. Marks, in Wakulla County, Florida. At the same time, a 2005 Freightliner truck-tractor in combination with an enclosed semitrailer was traveling westbound on US Highway 98 (US-98) approaching the intersection with SR-363. Both roads leading into the intersection were controlled by flashing signal lights. The signal facing the bus on approach to the intersection on SR-363 was a flashing red “stop” signal. The SR-363 portion of the intersection also included a stop sign and a stop bar. On its approach to the intersection on US-98, the truck faced a flashing yellow “caution” signal.

The bus driver failed to stop at the intersection and drove the bus into the truck’s path. The front of the truck collided with the left side of the bus slightly behind the left front axle. The truck-tractor rotated counterclockwise while its semitrailer continued forward and struck the left rear wheel area of the bus. Both vehicles traveled off the roadway into the southwest corner of the intersection and collided with a utility pole and other fixed utility objects. As a result of the crash, a fire erupted (see figure 1).



Figure 1. Bus and truck involved in the St. Marks, Florida, crash on fire in their final rest positions on the southwest corner of the intersection. In the photo, the bus is on the left, and the truck is on the right.

Billy R. Evans Harvesting Inc. of Belle Glade, Florida, operated the bus, which was occupied by the driver and at least 33 passengers. Most, but not all, of the passengers were agricultural migrant workers. As many as 50 passengers were reported to have been on the bus, but some may have fled the scene after the crash. The group of workers had been in Bainbridge, Georgia, harvesting corn. The corn season in Georgia was ending, and the workers were being transported back to their home area of Belle Glade when the crash occurred.

The truck, operated by Verity Van Lines Inc., a moving company based in Seaford, New York, was en route to its final delivery destination in St. George Island, Florida.

As a result of the collision and postcrash fire, the truck driver and three bus passengers died. The bus driver and 29 passengers sustained injuries of various degrees. A passenger who had been asleep in the sleeper berth of the truck at the time of the crash sustained minor injuries.

The NTSB is investigating the St. Marks crash in conjunction with two previous crashes involving the transportation of agricultural migrant workers—one in Little Rock Arkansas, and one in Ruther Glen, Virginia (see figure 2). All aspects of these three crashes remain under investigation as the NTSB determines their probable causes.



Figure 2. Left: On Friday, November 6, 2015, a motorcoach traveling from Michigan to Texas on Interstate 40 westbound struck the underside of an overpass in Little Rock, Arkansas. The bus was occupied by the driver and 22 passengers. As a result of the crash, six passengers died (NTSB accident HWY16FH003). **Right:** On Friday, June 17, 2016, a 15-passenger van traveling from North Carolina to New Jersey on Interstate 95 northbound lost control and rolled over near Ruther Glen, Virginia. The van was occupied by the driver and 15 passengers. As a result of the crash, six passengers were ejected from the van and died (NTSB accident HWY16FH015).