



National Transportation Safety Board
Washington, D.C. 20594

Highway Accident Brief

Accident No.: HWY-98-SH-008
Accident Type: Collision with jackknifed semitrailer
Location: Mendota, California
Date and Time: November 16, 1997; 9:42 a.m.
Vehicle 1 (V1): 1991 Freightliner tractor with a double flatbed semitrailer
Vehicle 2 (V2): 1982 Plymouth Voyager van
Fatalities/Injuries: 11 fatalities, 1 serious and 1 minor injury

Accident Description

A witness behind the van stated that the van's driver drove into the opposing lane of State Route 180 traffic at about 55 mph to pass two cars. (See figure 1.) The truckdriver stated that he saw the van's headlights through the fog traveling toward him in his lane. He said he braked, skidded, and jackknifed into the opposing lane. The van struck the right side of the tractor. Eleven of the 12 van occupants were killed. The right-rear van passenger sustained serious injuries, and the truckdriver sustained minor injuries.

State/Federal Oversight

California 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 carrier had been inspected under the California Highway Patrol's Biennial Inspection of Terminals Program in 1993, 1995, 1997, and 1999. In June 1997, the carrier received an unsatisfactory rating, mostly for hours-of-service violations and vehicle defects. In September 1997, the carrier was reinspected and given a satisfactory rating.

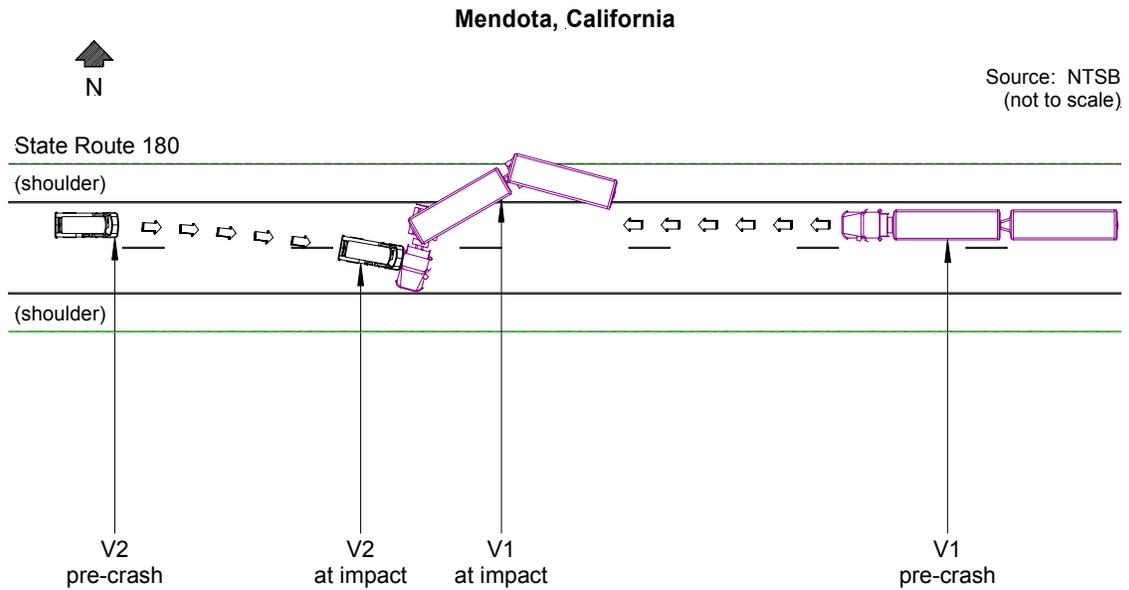


Figure 1. Accident diagram.

Probable Cause

The National Transportation Safety Board determines that the probable cause of the accident was the van driver's poor judgment in attempting to pass other vehicles in the fog.

Adopted: September 17, 2002