



PRELIMINARY REPORT

HIGHWAY

HWY18MH005

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

On Wednesday, January 31, 2018, about 11:16 a.m., a 2018 Freightliner truck equipped with a McNeilus Truck & Manufacturing refuse body was traveling southbound on Lanetown Road in Albemarle County near Crozet, Virginia. The refuse truck, operated by Time Disposal LLC, was occupied by a 30-year-old driver and two passengers as it approached a highway–railroad grade crossing, later identified as DOT crossing 224704E. The crossing is active and includes advance warning signs and pavement markings on its approach. The crossing is also equipped with (1) crossbuck signs, (2) warning lights, (3) bells, and (4) gates (see figure 1).



Figure 1. Southbound view of highway–rail grade crossing showing active warning devices.

At the same time, westbound Congressional Special Amtrak Train 923, operated by Amtrak and consisting of two locomotives and eight passenger cars, was approaching the highway–railroad grade crossing. The train’s lead locomotive was equipped with a forward-facing track image camera. Data extracted from the camera postcrash showed that as the crossing came into view, the gates were down and the refuse truck was on the grade crossing. Witnesses to the crash reported that the refuse truck entered the crossing after the gates were down.

Preliminary information from the train’s onboard recorder indicates that the Amtrak train was traveling about 61 mph when the engineer applied emergency braking. The train struck the left rear of the refuse truck, causing the truck to rotate counterclockwise and then collide with a

railroad signal bungalow next to the tracks on the southwest side of Lanetown Road (see figure 2). The refuse body separated from the truck, and the truck's two passengers were ejected. The truck came to rest off the southwest edge of Lanetown Road.



Figure 2. Aerial view of the highway-railroad grade crossing, truck chassis, body, and debris at final rest. (National Transportation Safety Board drone)

During the crash sequence, the front axle of the lead locomotive derailed as the train continued west; however, the locomotive remained upright (see figure 3).

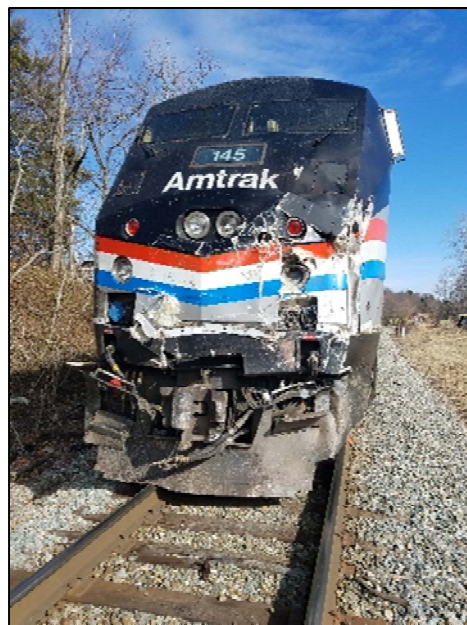


Figure 3. Front of lead locomotive.

As a result of the crash, one passenger in the refuse truck died. The other truck passenger sustained serious injuries, and the driver of the truck sustained minor injuries. Three Amtrak crewmembers and three train passengers sustained minor injuries.

National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) investigators, along with personnel from the Albemarle County Police Department and the Federal Bureau of Investigation, documented the crash scene and the physical characteristics of the crossing, the train, and the refuse truck. The track and operational characteristics of the crossing signals were also examined and documented.

NTSB investigators continue to examine issues related to the highway–railroad grade crossing. Investigators are also coordinating additional passenger and witness interviews and continue to gather information related to motor carrier operations, rail operations, and driver and train crew experience. All aspects of the crash remain under investigation while the NTSB determines the probable cause, with the intent of issuing safety recommendations to prevent similar crashes.