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Preliminary Report HWY24MH005

This information is preliminary and subject to change.

School Bus Collision With Combination Vehicle and Postcrash Fire

Rushville, Illinois
March 11, 2024

On Monday, March 11, 2024, at about 11:29 a.m. central daylight time, a 2020 Micro Bird MB II 25-passenger school bus (school bus) was traveling east on U.S. Highway 24 (US-24), near Rushville, Schuyler County, Illinois. The school bus was operated by Schuyler-Industry Community Unit School District No. 5 in Rushville and was occupied by a female driver and three student passengers ranging in age from 3 to 5 years old. At the same time, a 2001 Mack CH613 truck-tractor in combination with a 2001 Vantage 39-foot end-dump semitrailer (combination vehicle), occupied by a male driver, was traveling west on US-24 approaching the school bus. The combination vehicle was operated by Beaird Transport, Inc., of Astoria, Illinois, and the end-dump semitrailer was loaded with sand. The school bus was traveling through a right-hand curve. About halfway through the curve, the school bus crossed over the broken yellow centerline and entered the westbound traffic lane, where it subsequently collided head-on with the combination vehicle. Following the impact, both vehicles departed the roadway to the north, where the combination vehicle's semitrailer overturned, and both vehicles were engulfed in a postcrash fire.

As a result, the drivers of both vehicles and the three student passengers on the school bus were fatally injured.

At this location, US-24 was an undivided two-lane asphalt roadway consisting of one 11-foot-wide travel lane for each direction of travel. The eastbound travel lane was flanked by a 3.5-foot-wide asphalt-paved shoulder that transitioned to a 7-foot-wide crushed-aggregate shoulder. The westbound travel lane was flanked by a 3-foot-wide asphalt-paved shoulder that transitioned to a 5-foot-wide crushed-aggregate

shoulder. Adjacent to both shoulders were drainage ditches. The posted speed limit on US-24 was 55 mph. At the time of the crash, the weather was clear and dry.

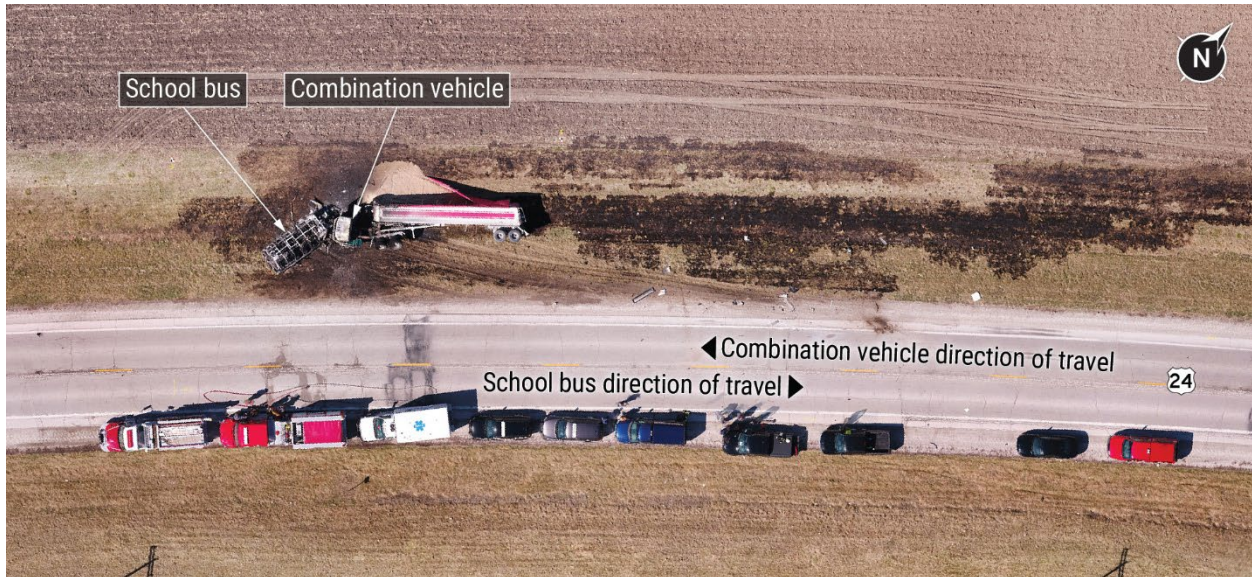


Figure 1. Postcrash orthomosaic aerial image showing final rest positions of the school bus and combination vehicle. Emergency and first responder vehicles are parked on the south shoulder and were not present at the time of the crash. (Source: Illinois State Police; annotated by NTSB)

Parties to the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) investigation are:

- Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration
- Illinois State Police
- Illinois Department of Transportation

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 events.