



PRELIMINARY REPORT

HIGHWAY

HWY20MH002

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

On Sunday, January 5, 2020, about 3:30 a.m. eastern standard time, a multivehicle crash occurred in the westbound lanes of Interstate 70 (I-70, the Pennsylvania Turnpike) at mile-marker 86.1 near Mount Pleasant, Westmoreland County, Pennsylvania (see figure 1). The posted speed limit on I-70 in the area of the crash is 70 mph, but an advisory sign ahead of the crash location warns westbound vehicles of a 55-mph speed limit for an upcoming left curve.

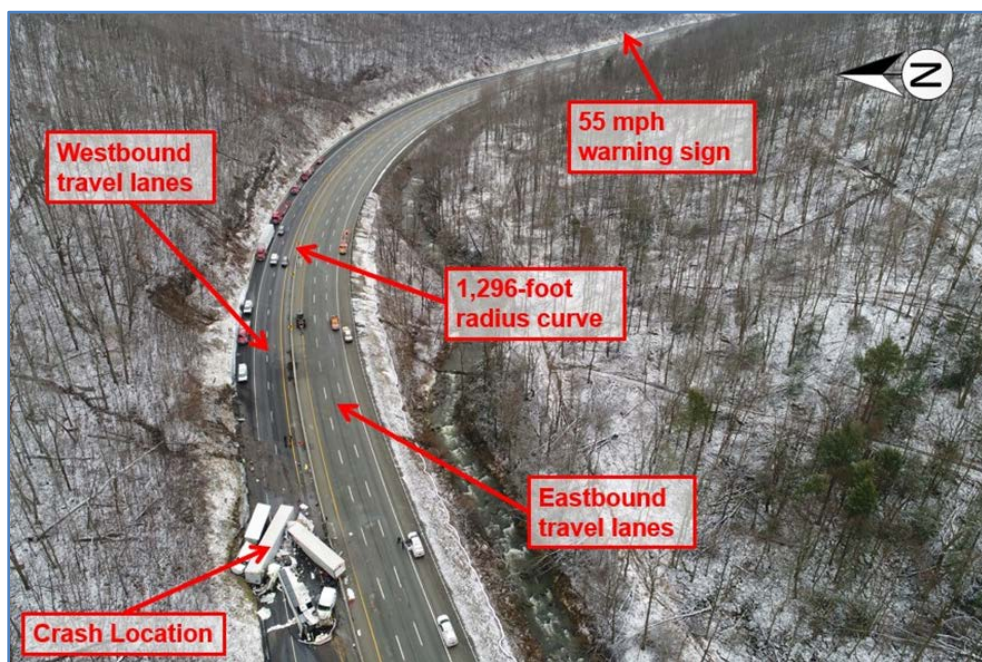


Figure 1. View of vehicles at final rest below 1,296-foot-radius curve on westbound Pennsylvania Turnpike. (Source: Pennsylvania State Police)

The crash sequence began with a westbound 57-passenger 2005 Van Hool motorcoach, occupied by a 58-year-old male driver and 59 passengers and operated by Z&D Tour, Inc. while descending a 3-percent slope and traveling through the curve, the motorcoach veered from the travel lanes toward the median, and onto the paved left shoulder (equipped with grooved rumble strips). The motorcoach then veered toward the right, crossed all travel lanes and the right shoulder (also equipped with grooved rumble strips), and collided with a steep earthen embankment. The motorcoach then rolled onto its passenger side and slid to a stop. At final rest, the motorcoach stretched diagonally across the westbound lanes and shoulders, with its underside facing oncoming traffic. Light snow was falling, and the roadway had been treated with salt.

After the motorcoach came to rest, it was struck by a 2018 Freightliner Cascadia truck-tractor in combination with a semitrailer, operated by FedEx Ground, that was traveling in the right lane (see figure 2). The FedEx truck, occupied by a 35-year-old male driver and a 35-year-old male codriver, came to rest blocking the left lane and median shoulder. A 2018 Freightliner Cascadia truck-tractor and semitrailer combination vehicle, operated by United Parcel Service (UPS truck No. 1), that was traveling in the inside westbound lane then struck the FedEx truck semitrailer and the overturned motorcoach. UPS truck No. 1 was occupied by a 53-year-old male driver and a 48-year-old male codriver.



Figure 2. View looking east showing motorcoach and FedEx truck at final rest. (Source: Pennsylvania State Police)

A 2007 Mercedes-Benz car, occupied by a 46-year-old male driver and two 20-year-old male passengers, was traveling west on I-70. The driver saw the two truck-tractor combination vehicles collide with the motorcoach. To avoid the collision, the driver steered off the road, and the car slid to a stop next to UPS truck No. 1. A second 2018 Freightliner Cascadia truck-tractor and semitrailer combination vehicle, also operated by United Parcel Service (UPS truck No. 2), swerved right to avoid the other vehicles, departed the road and the right shoulder, and traveled partly up the earthen embankment. UPS truck No. 2 then hit the car and came to rest between the embankment and the car. UPS truck No. 2 was occupied by a 62-year-old male driver and a 45-year-old codriver.

As a result of the crash, the motorcoach driver, two motorcoach passengers, and the driver and codriver of UPS truck No. 1 died. About 57 motorcoach passengers were injured. The FedEx truck driver was not injured; the codriver had minor injuries. The driver of the car, the car's two passengers, and the driver and codriver of UPS truck No. 2 were not injured.

The National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) is gathering records on the commercial drivers involved in the crash. The NTSB is also evaluating occupant protection, human performance, vehicle performance, the Pennsylvania Turnpike Commission's snow- and ice-removal procedures, collision avoidance technology installed on the three truck-tractors, and the safety culture of Z&D Tour. 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. The NTSB is working alongside the Pennsylvania State Police (PSP) and the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) to compile a complete and accurate account of the crash. In addition to the PSP and the FMCSA, the United Parcel Service, FedEx Ground, the Pennsylvania Turnpike Commission, and Daimler Trucks North America are parties to the investigation.