



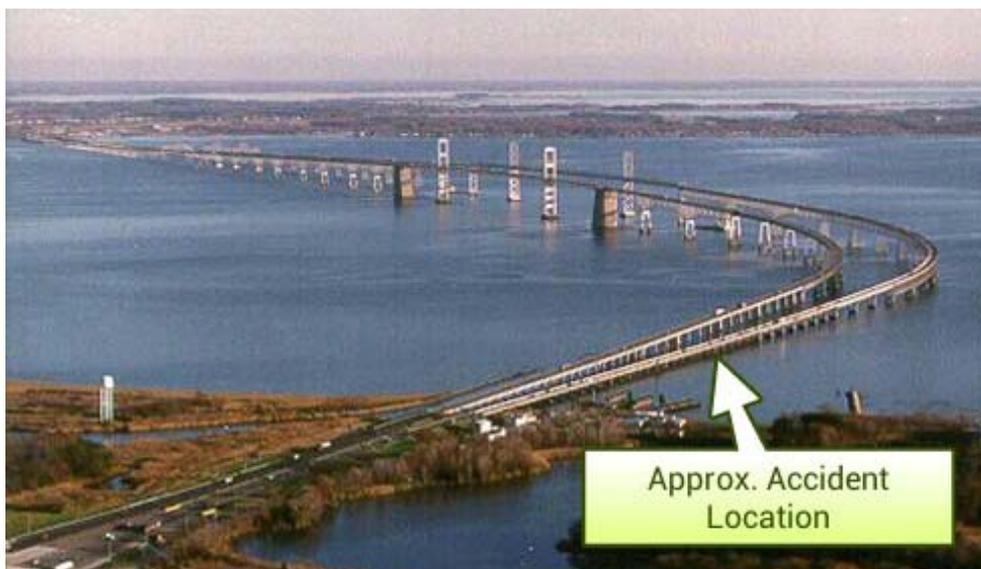
## PRELIMINARY REPORT

### HIGHWAY

### HWY13IH018

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

About 8:24 p.m. eastern daylight time on Friday, July 19, 2013, a 2007 Chrysler Sebring passenger car operated by a 24-year-old female driver was traveling eastbound on US 50/301 near Annapolis, Maryland. The Chrysler had passed through the toll plaza to enter onto the eastbound span of the William Preston Lane, Jr., Memorial Bridge (Chesapeake Bay Bridge). Less than a mile past the toll plaza, after traffic had merged from 11 toll lanes into 2 travel lanes, traffic began to slow as the bridge ascended above the Chesapeake Bay and curved to the left. The Chrysler was in the right-hand lane and had reduced speed due to the traffic queue ahead when it was struck from behind by a 2010 International truck-tractor and refrigerated trailer combination vehicle. The International truck, being operated by a 29-year-old male driver, collided with the left rear corner of the Chrysler, pushing it into the concrete barrier wall adjacent to the right-hand lane. The International truck and the Chrysler continued forward and collided with a 2014 Mazda CX-5 occupied by a 65-year-old male driver and his wife. During the accident sequence, the Chrysler was pushed up onto, and then rode along the top of, the barrier wall before falling approximately 27 feet into the Chesapeake Bay. The Chrysler came to rest between two bridge piers to the south of the eastbound span, in approximately 7 feet of water. The Mazda rotated counter-clockwise and came to rest near the left front corner of the International truck in the middle of the two travel lanes. (See figure for approximate accident location.)



**Figure.** View of Chesapeake Bay Bridge looking east, showing point where accident took place

As a result of the accident, the driver of the Chrysler received minor injuries. She was able to swim to one of the nearby bridge piers, from which she was rescued and transported to an area hospital. The driver of the International truck and both occupants of the Mazda were uninjured.

The truck driver reported that he had been traveling in the right-hand lane and that, just prior to the accident, he had turned his attention to the driver-side mirror due to lights and sounds behind him. He said that when he looked forward again, he saw that traffic was stopped, and he attempted to avoid colliding with the Chrysler by moving to the left but could not avoid the collision. Weather conditions were clear and dry, and it was near sunset at the time of the accident. All vehicles involved in the accident were inspected, and no mechanical defects were found.

The company operating the International truck-tractor combination vehicle was Bulk Carriers PEI Limited, based in Prince Edward Island, Canada. The truck driver had been employed by Bulk Carriers PEI since April 2013. He had emigrated from Hungary to Canada as part of Canada's Temporary Foreign Worker pilot project. This trip was the truck driver's first time driving in the United States without being paired with a more experienced driver. He had made a delivery in Orange, Virginia, and at the time of the accident was en route to pick up his next load at a location in Maryland.

The Chesapeake Bay Bridge is approximately 4.3 miles long and consists of two parallel spans connecting the eastern and western shores of Maryland; the eastbound span carries two lanes of traffic and the westbound span carries three lanes of traffic. The eastbound span was the original two-lane bridge, completed in 1952. The current westbound span was added in 1973. To increase lane capacity in a particular direction of travel, or to manage traffic during bridge maintenance or emergencies, a single lane of either span can be reversed from its typical direction of travel, an operating condition known as "contra-flow." Contra-flow operations were not in effect on either span at the time of the accident. Since 2007, three fatal accidents have taken place on the Chesapeake Bay Bridge, two of which occurred during contra-flow operations.

The superstructure of the Chesapeake Bay Bridge varies depending on the location. The type of bridge superstructure in the vicinity of the accident was beam span construction. The concrete barrier walls in that vicinity were 34 inches high and met the equivalent of test level 4 (TL-4) performance barriers. After the accident, the barrier remained intact and in place on the bridge deck. The NTSB investigated an accident that occurred on August 10, 2008, in which a truck-tractor semitrailer combination vehicle struck and dislodged a concrete barrier in a beam span portion of the eastbound span of the bridge. In that case, the combination vehicle and a 12-foot section of barrier fell into the Chesapeake Bay, and the truck driver was fatally injured. After the 2008 accident, the concrete barriers in the beam span portions of the eastbound span were upgraded to TL-4 barriers. The July 2013 and August 2008 accidents are the only known instances in which vehicles have fallen from the bridge into the water.