

U.S. Department of Justice

United States Attorney

Eastern District of Pennsylvania

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April 23, 2002

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**TRUCK DRIVER CHARGED WITH MAKING FALSE
STATEMENTS TO U.S. DEPARTMENT OF
TRANSPORTATION**

Driver Involved In 1999 Crash That Killed Four In Berks County

Patrick L. Meehan, United States Attorney for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania, today announced that a federal grand jury has returned a 42 Count Indictment¹ charging **Gulvinder Singh Sandhu**, of Quebec, Canada, with Making False Statements to the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT), in violation of 18 U.S.C. §1001.

Commercial truck drivers, like defendant **Gulvinder Singh Sandhu**, are required under federal law to maintain truthful and accurate driver daily logbooks for inspection by the United States Department of Transportation. Federal highway safety regulations require truck drivers to maintain truthful driver's daily logbooks for several reasons, including so that federal inspectors can accurately determine whether a commercial truck driver has exceeded the maximum allowable number of daily driving hours without having the required 8 consecutive hours of rest or off-duty time. The maximum allowable lawful number of daily driving and on-duty hours were implemented to ensure that truck drivers operate their multi-ton trucks in a safe, unimpaired manner and that the drivers are not tired and fatigued while driving.

According to the Indictment, the defendant falsified his commercial truck driver's daily logbook on a consistent, and almost daily basis, between August 2, 1999 and September 22, 1999. The Indictment alleges that on each of the 42 dates charged in August and September, 1999, the defendant falsified his driver daily logbook in one of several ways: a) the times which he crossed the Border from Canada into the United States, b) that he was in the sleeper berth of his truck when in fact he was actually driving, and c) that he was at a location other than where he was actually driving, in order to conceal and cover up the fact that he was driving more than the maximum number of lawful daily driving hours in violation of federal highway safety regulations.

The Indictment specifically alleges that on September 22, 1999, defendant **Gulvinder Singh Sandhu**, knowingly falsified his logbook in stating that he was in the sleeper

¹An Indictment or Information is an accusation. A defendant is presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty.

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berth of his truck from midnight until 5:00 a.m., when in fact, he knew that he was actually driving his truck from Canada since approximately 6:58 p.m. on September 21 through approximately 1:30 a.m. on September 22 when he arrived in Easton, PA. After falsifying his logbook, the defendant drove his multi-ton 1993 Freightliner tractor trailer loaded with bags of salt, westbound on Interstate Route 78 (I-78) until approximately 6:15 a.m., when his truck swerved into a median guardrail in Greenwich Township, Berks County, Pennsylvania. The trailer portion of his tractor trailer jumped the guardrail and travelled in a perpendicular motion in an eastbound lane of travel on I-78. The trailer portion of the defendant's truck crashed into a 1998 Pontiac Montana van traveling eastbound on I-78, killing 4 people in the van, including the driver, Robert Ruggeri (age 44), and passengers Meryl Ruggeri (age 41, Robert Ruggeri's wife), Christopher Ruggeri (age 4, the Ruggeri's son), and Louis Campbell (age 62, Meryl Ruggeri's father). In addition, the defendant caused serious bodily injuries to two other children of the Ruggeri's who were also passengers in the van, Robert, Jr. (age 5) and Louis (age 8).

This case represents the seventh prosecution by the U.S. Attorney's Office in a series of truck crashes involving fatalities and/or serious bodily injuries in which truck drivers have falsified their driver daily logbooks and drove in a tired and fatigued condition. U.S. Attorney Patrick L. Meehan said, "Our office intends to continue to enforce the federal highway safety laws in order to protect the innocent members of the traveling public."

INFORMATION REGARDING THE DEFENDANT

NAME	ADDRESS	AGE OR DATE OF BIRTH
Gulvinder Singh Sandhu	Quebec, Canada	37

If convicted of the charges, defendant **Gulvinder Singh Sandhu** faces a possible maximum sentence of 5 years imprisonment, a \$250,000 fine, 3 years supervised release and a \$100 special assessment, as to each count.

The case was investigated by the United States Department of Transportation, Office of Inspector General (DOT/OIG), the Pennsylvania State Police, Hamburg Barracks, with cooperation from the Berks County District Attorney's Office. Prosecution has been assigned to Assistant United States Attorney Seth Weber.

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