

**DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION**

**Federal Railroad Administration**

**Safety Advisory 2008-02**

**AGENCY:** Federal Railroad Administration (FRA), DOT.

**ACTION:** Notice of Safety Advisory; Side Sill Failure of ACF Center Flow® Covered Hopper Cars.

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**SUMMARY:** FRA's Office of Safety Assurance and Compliance Motive Power and Equipment (MP&E) Division has been notified of a catastrophic failure of side sill(s) on an American Car and Foundry (ACF) manufactured covered hopper car CSXT 254526. This failure occurred on a siding track near Nashville, TN on April 16, 2008.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Tom Blankenship, Mechanical Engineer, MP&E Division (RRS-14); FRA Office of Safety Assurance and Compliance, 1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE, Washington, DC 20590, telephone: (202) 493-6446.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** On May 14, 1979, the Association of American Railroads (AAR) Executive Director F.A. Danahy wrote to the Chief Mechanical Officers of railroads via Circular Letter c-5162, and advised that the AAR had received reports of American Car and Foundry (ACF) Center Flow® covered hopper cars with cracks at the side sill area and recommended that cars be inspected.

In 1989 the car builder, ACF Shippers Car Line Division issued Procedure Number P064, "*Maintenance of Side Sills-Body Bolster Area,*" which provided a 12 page detailed

instruction for inspection and repair of all ACF Center Flow® Cars using the “pistol” reinforcement plate shown in Diagram “A” of the procedure.

On February 19, 1999, AAR Assistant Vice President P.T. Ameen issued Maintenance Advisory MA-53, (c-8991), which advised the industry of additional side sill failures on ACF Center Flow® cars built from June 1964 thru October 1978, covering approximately 40,000 cars subject to side sill cracking.

As a result of the above referenced incident on April 16, 2008, the CSX Railroad which experienced complete side sill (both sides), side sheet and roof fracture on CSXT 254526 (A-end pulled completely from car body), has taken appropriate action to issue instructions to inspect and repair cars in their ownership via CSX Car Maintenance Instruction (CMI) 13-1004 on April 18, 2008, which gives car inspectors and maintenance personnel guidance on the inspection and handling of the ACF Center Flow® Cars on CSX property.

The Association of American Railroads has also issued guidance in response to the latest failure of ACF design covered hoppers by publishing AAR Maintenance Advisory (MA-102) dated May 9, 2008, “*Inspection Program-ACF Built Center Flow Covered Hopper Cars.*”

In MA-102, the AAR has provided a unique Job Code, 4453, to report inspection activity mandated by their advisory.

**RECOMMENDED ACTION:** Recognizing the need to ensure safety, FRA recommends that railroads and car owners that operate the ACF Center Flow® covered hopper cars inspect and where necessary repair and reinforce the side sills (four locations) using ACF Procedure Number P064.

FRA may modify this Safety Advisory 2008-02, issue additional safety advisories, or take other appropriate action necessary to ensure the highest level of safety on the Nation's railroads.

Issued in Washington, DC, on July 22, 2008.

Jo Strang

Associate Administrator for Safety