

Log R-642

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

Washington, D.C. 20594

Safety Recommendation



Date: May 24, 1993

In reply refer to: R-93-4

Mr. Stanley Brezenoff
Executive Director
Port Authority of New York and New Jersey
1 World Trade Center - 67 West
New York, New York 10048

On February 26, 1993, an explosion at the World Trade Center (WTC) killed 6 persons and injured more than 1,000 others. The blast substantially damaged five underground levels of the complex, including the Port Authority Trans Hudson Corporation's (PATH's) rapid rail terminal.

New York city authorities notified the Safety Board that a PATH train M-3 was involved in an accident at the WTC terminal. The Safety Board responded and was advised that the explosion caused the injuries and damage at the WTC terminal. In later interviews with PATH safety officials, the Safety Board discovered that no disaster drills had been performed by PATH and the eight jurisdictions PATH serves since March 18, 1990.

For the last 20 years, the Safety Board has addressed the issue of rail rapid transit safety in accident investigations and special studies. In the report of its investigation of a rail rapid transit accident¹ in New York, New York, on August 28, 1991, the Safety Board stated:

The well-organized and well-coordinated response of each of the emergency service departments resulted in the rapid treatment of the injured, minimizing the severity of the injuries in this accident.

¹Railroad Accident Report--New York City Transit Authority Derailment at Union Square Station, New York, New York, August 28, 1991 NTSB/RAR-92/03/SUM.

For the last decade, the New York City Transit Authority, with the cooperation of the city's emergency response agencies, has been performing quarterly disaster drills. Interagency coordination has continued to prove beneficial for these agencies.

The Safety Board found that PATH's emergency plan specifies detailed steps to deal with most potential emergency scenarios. However, only through timely disaster drills that include these scenarios can PATH assess the ability of all relevant agencies to perform in an actual disaster.

Therefore, the National Transportation Safety Board recommends that the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey:

Perform at least annual disaster drills that include PATH employees in conjunction with the emergency response agencies that respond to actual emergencies within the PATH rail rapid transit system. (Class II, Priority Action) (R-93-4)

The National Transportation Safety Board is an independent Federal agency with the statutory responsibility ". . . to promote transportation safety by conducting independent accident investigations and by formulating safety improvement recommendations" (Public Law 93-633). The Safety Board is vitally interested in any actions taken as a result of its safety recommendations and would appreciate a response from you regarding action taken or contemplated with respect to the recommendation in this letter. Please refer to Safety Recommendation R-93-4 in your reply.

Chairman **VOGT**, Vice Chairman **COUGHLIN**, and Members **LAUBER**, **HART**, and **HAMMERSCHMIDT**, concurred in this recommendation.


By: Carl W. Vogt
Chairman