

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD
WASHINGTON, D.C.

ISSUED: November 27, 1978

Forwarded to:

Mr. A. V. Hooks
Chairman of the Board and President
Atlanta & Saint Andrews Bay Railway
Company
P.O. Box 669
Panama City, Florida 32401

SAFETY RECOMMENDATION(S)

R-78-57

About 1:55 a.m., c.s.t., on February 26, 1978, an Atlanta & Saint Andrews Bay Railway Company freight train derailed at milepost 22.3 near Youngstown, Florida. As a result, chlorine gas, released from a punctured tank car, killed 8 persons and injured 138. Property damage was estimated at \$1,089,000. 1/

After determining the extent of damage and realizing the hazards involved, the train crewmembers began to notify area residents and local authorities of the danger. Their postaccident emergency efforts were hampered, however, by their inability to contact railroad officials at nearby Sherman Yard. They could not communicate with the railroad facility because the base station at Sherman Yard was not manned after midnight.

Fortuitously, crewmembers stopped a deputy sheriff on parallel State Highway 231, who was able to use his radio to summon help and initiate emergency procedures. Almost simultaneously, the train's conductor reached a public telephone and notified the local sheriff's office of the hazard.

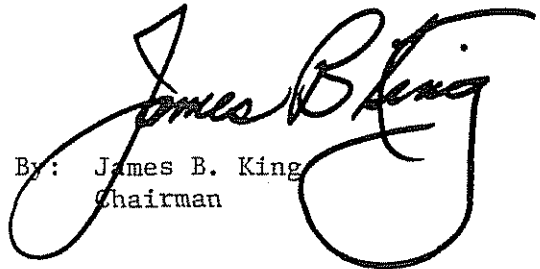
Neither of these calls, however, was received before 2:24 a.m., almost 30 minutes after the toxic substance was released into the environment. Had this derailment occurred in a more isolated area where public telephones were not readily available, or had the deputy sheriff not arrived on the scene by chance, the notification delay could have been much longer than 30 minutes.

1/ For more detailed information read "Railroad Accident Report--
Derailment of Atlanta & Saint Andrews Bay Railway Company Freight
Train, Youngstown, Florida, February 26, 1978" (NTSB-RAR-78-7).

Therefore, the National Transportation Safety Board recommends that the Atlanta & Saint Andrews Bay Railway:

Maintain a 24-hour radio communications monitoring capability between trains and communications base stations. (Class I, Urgent Action) (R-78-57)

KING, Chairman, DRIVER, Vice Chairman, McADAMS and HOGUE, Members, concurred in the above recommendation.

A large, stylized handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "James B. King". The signature is written over the typed name and title.

By: James B. King
Chairman