

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD
WASHINGTON, D.C.

ISSUED: February 15, 1978

Forwarded to:

Honorable John M. Sullivan
Administrator
Federal Railroad Administration
Washington, D.C. 20590

SAFETY RECOMMENDATION(S)

R-78-5 and 6

About 11:05 p.m. on June 12, 1977, ConRail freight train WA-4 collided with the rear of ConRail freight train WA-6 at Stemmers Run near Baltimore, Maryland. Two crewmembers on each train were injured. Damage was estimated to be about \$300,000. 1/

The accident resulted when the engineer of train WA-4 permitted his train to approach a signal at a speed too great to stop short of the signal and train WA-6 ahead. His excessive speed was based on an erroneous assumption that the signal aspect would change to a more favorable aspect. However train WA-6 had stopped because of an emergency brake application which the engineer of train WA-4 had not predicted.

Although the locomotives of both trains were equipped with operable radios, and in spite of the fact that the two engineers had conversed by radio 5 minutes earlier, the engineer of the first train did not inform the engineer of the second train or anyone else that the first train had stopped.

The Board believes that if such information had been transmitted, it may have alerted the engineer of train WA-4 in time for him to stop short of the collision.

The Safety Board has made a number of recommendations to FRA since 1968 regarding the role of radio as it relates to safety in train operations. To summarize, those recommendations called for Federal regulations to provide for the use of radio in railroad operations with traditional safeguards found in existing railroad operating rules; require that railroads equipped for radio communication facilities

1/ For more detailed information read "Railroad Accident Report - Rear End Collision of Two ConRail Freight Trains, Stemmers Run, Baltimore, Maryland, June 12, 1977" (NTSB-RAR-78-1).

install radios in appropriate parts of trains and maintain them in operating condition; and require carriers to establish radio procedures to insure that trains which stop in restricted visibility areas will notify by radio or by flag trains approaching from the rear.

From FRA responses and activities to date, the Board understands that FRA believes that the regulations in 49 CFR 220 which prescribe guidelines for the use of train radio are sufficient and that the FRA cannot justify imposing specific requirements on all carriers to equip all trains with radio and use them in a specific manner.

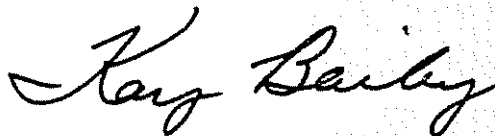
In 1972, the Safety Board recommended that the FRA "review, and revise as necessary, its accident reporting requirements and investigation procedures to insure that all facets of the involvement of radio or the absence of radio are determined and reported." Since January 1, 1975, FRA's revised reporting requirements have included five separate accident causal codes relating to radio. Analysis of the data reported in the past 3 years should show the role of radio in railroad accidents.

Therefore, the National Transportation Safety Board recommends that the Federal Railroad Administration:

Analyze the data relating to the role of radio in train accidents and report its findings.
(Class II, Priority Action)(R-78-5)

Unless refuted by the above analysis, require railroads to install radios where appropriate on trains and to maintain them in operating condition, unless all personnel involved are notified to the contrary by appropriate railroad procedures. (Class II, Priority Action)
(R-78-6)

BAILEY, Acting Chairman, McADAMS, HOGUE, and KING, Members, concurred in the above recommendations.



BY: Kay Bailey
Acting Chairman