

R-242A

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD  
WASHINGTON, D.C.

ISSUED: August 9, 1979

Forwarded to:

Honorable H.L. Fisher  
Chairman  
Metropolitan Transportation Authority  
1700 Broadway  
New York, New York 10019

SAFETY RECOMMENDATION(S)

R-79-56

On December 12, 1978, New York City Transit Authority (NYCTA) subway train designated "CC" 4:06 p.m. departed southbound from Bedford Park on time. The train, consisting of eight cars, continued southward making its scheduled station stops. As the train was leaving 125th Street station, 6 miles south of Bedford Park, the platform conductor saw smoke coming from under the sixth car. This conductor notified the dispatcher at 125th Street who, in turn, arranged for a road car inspector to meet the train at the 59th Street station. As the train arrived at the 59th Street station, the road car inspector was waiting on the platform. He conducted a cursory inspection and permitted the train to continue. He boarded the sixth car to continue to check for the problem. Moments after departing 59th Street station, the sixth and seventh cars derailed. 1/

Metallurgical tests revealed that two wheels on the No. 1 axle of the sixth car had broken after developing cracks from overheating. While conducting this investigation, three other trains derailed from similar causes. The derailments occurred on January 15, 1979, on February 14, 1979, and on March 21, 1979.

The cracked wheels were all on the No. 1 truck--the handbrake truck--and had been exposed to excessive heating. The Safety Board concluded that the subway cars involved in these accidents were permitted to operate with handbrakes partially applied--a condition which created a brakeshoe condition that caused the wheels to overheat and fracture.

Therefore, the National Transportation Safety Board recommends that the Metropolitan Transportation Authority:

1/ For more detailed information read "Railroad Accident Report--Derailment of New York City Transit Authority Subway Train, New York, New York, December 12, 1978" (NTSB-RAR-79-8).

Require the New York City Transit Authority to establish an inspection procedure that will detect overheated wheels before failure. (Class II, Priority Action) (R-79-56)

KING, Chairman, McADAMS, GOLDMAN, and BURSLEY, Members, concurred in the above recommendations. DRIVER, Vice Chairman, did not participate.

  
By: James B. King  
Chairman