



National Transportation Safety Board

Washington, D.C. 20594

Railroad Accident Brief

Accident No: ATL-97-FR-004
Location: Jacksonville, Florida
Date of Accident: February 5, 1997
Time: 4:45 p.m. eastern standard time
Railroad: National Railroad Passenger Corporation (Amtrak)
Motor Carrier: Coastal Transport, Inc.
Injured: 15 minor
Property Damage: \$1,410,000
Type of Accident: Grade crossing collision

The Accident

About 4:45 p.m., eastern standard time, on February 5, 1997, National Railroad Passenger Corporation (Amtrak) train P098, the *Silver Meteor*, while operating over CSX Transportation (CSXT) tracks, struck a tractor-semitrailer combination at Old Kings Road in Jacksonville, Florida. The locomotive and four leading cars derailed. Of the 182 passengers and crew onboard the train, 15 reported injuries. The injured passengers were treated and released the same day. The locomotive engineer and assistant engineer were hospitalized and released after 48 hours with minor injuries. The tractor-semitrailer was destroyed. The truck driver had exited the truck prior to the collision and was not injured. Damages are estimated at \$1,410,000. Weather at the time was clear, with a temperature of 70° F.

The tractor-semitrailer was operated by Coastal Transport, Inc., (CTI) of Savannah, Georgia. About 4:35 p.m. on the day of the accident, the truckdriver attempted to turn his vehicle around near the grade crossing on Old Kings Road. The driver stated that in the process of turning around, the semitrailer hung on the crossing, and the drive wheels left the pavement and lost traction. The driver of a passing pickup truck stopped and attempted, unsuccessfully, to use a chain to pull the larger truck back onto the pavement where traction could be restored.

Amtrak train P098, with one locomotive, one baggage car, and nine passenger cars, originated in Miami on the day of the accident. Approaching Old Kings Road at milepost 631.8 on the CSXT Nahunta Subdivision, the engine crew observed that the crossing gates were down and that a truck was on the track. When he realized that the truck was not moving, the engineer applied the train's emergency brakes. The locomotive event recorder indicates that the train was traveling at its authorized track speed of 79 mph when the emergency brakes were applied 1,721 feet from the crossing. The train had

slowed to 23 mph at impact. The collision caused the locomotive and the first four cars to derail. The locomotive and baggage car came to rest on their sides. All derailed passenger cars remained upright. The train crew organized an evacuation of passengers, which was accomplished without incident. Police and emergency medical personnel arrived on scene shortly after the accident.

The CTI truck was equipped with both a CB radio and a Qualcomm satellite communication system. The satellite communication system was designed to allow text communication between the truckdriver and the CTI dispatcher. The truckdriver did not attempt to use the CB radio or the satellite system to contact anyone about fouling the track at the crossing.

Probable Cause

The National Transportation Safety Board determines that the probable cause of this accident was the tractor-semitrailer driver's improper turn on a narrow road that resulted in fouling a grade crossing and the truckdriver's failure to use available communication devices to warn authorities that his vehicle was fouling the tracks.

Approved: October 26, 2001