

Log R-473

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD  
WASHINGTON, D.C.

ISSUED: June 18, 1984

Forwarded to:

Mr. William H. Dempsey  
President  
Association of American Railroads  
1920 L Street, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20036

SAFETY RECOMMENDATION(S)

R-84-32

At 5:32 a.m., c.d.t., on September 14, 1983, Seaboard System Railroad (SBD) train Extra 1751 North moved onto the main track from the north end of the siding at Sullivan, Indiana, and proceeded northward. About 5:37 a.m., after Extra 1751 North had attained a speed of approximately 18 mph and had traveled 1,939 feet beyond the siding switch, SBD train Extra 8051 North, moving about 35 mph, overtook and struck the rear caboose of Extra 1751 North. The impact derailed 2 cars and 2 cabooses of Extra 1751 North and 3 locomotive units and 25 cars of Extra 8051 North. The two crewmembers in the rear caboose of Extra 1751 North were killed, and three crewmembers on Extra 8051 North were injured. No hazardous material cars were involved in the derailment. 1/

The postaccident signal tests indicated that the last aspect displayed by the absolute signal at South Sullivan before the accident was an approach (yellow) aspect. A proper response to this signal indication would have been for the head brakeman of Extra 8051 North, since he was operating the train, to have reduced the speed of the train to no more than medium speed (30 mph) and to have proceeded prepared to stop at North Sullivan. The last aspect displayed by the absolute signal at North Sullivan, as determined by the postaccident tests, was stop (red). In order for the head brakeman to have operated the train past the absolute stop signal, special authority would have been required from the train dispatcher. Such authority was neither requested nor granted. The head brakeman should have stopped the train in approach to this signal, but he did not.

The signal at the Illinois Central Gulf Railroad crossing south of Sullivan and intermediate wayside signal 207.0 each displayed an approach medium signal aspect because the signal for the main track at North Sullivan was displaying a stop aspect after the passage of train No. 722. These aspects should have forewarned the head brakeman of Extra 8051 North to expect an approach aspect to be displayed by the signal at South Sullivan and a stop aspect to be displayed by the signal at North Sullivan. The head

1/ For more detailed information, read Railroad Accident Report—"Rear End Collision of Seaboard System Railroad Freight Trains Extra 8051 North and Extra 1751 North, Sullivan, Indiana, September 14, 1983" (NTSB/RAR-84/02).

brakeman did not respond to these two signals as evidenced by his passing the approach aspect displayed by the signal at South Sullivan without reducing the speed of the train to the 30-mph medium speed and preparing to stop at the next signal as required by operating rule No. 285.

Had a procedure been in effect which required the engineer to radio the five wayside signal aspects between North Oaktown and North Sullivan to the conductor, the conductor might have been alerted to the inattentiveness of the enginecrew and been able to take preventive action. On September 10, 1976, the Safety Board recommended that the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA),

Promulgate rules to require engine crews to communicate fixed signal aspects to conductors while trains are en route on signalized track. (R-76-50) 2/

On May 13, 1977, the FRA replied that "in keeping train crews alert, a diligent carrier conducted rules instruction and testing program on operating rules would be a great deal more effective than would be federally promulgated rules of the type recommended in R-76-50." The Safety Board reiterated this recommendation on April 7, 1981, following its investigation of an accident at Hermosa, Wyoming. 3/

On April 22, 1981, the Safety Board made the following recommendation to the Association of American Railroads (AAR) as a result of its investigation of the Hermosa accident:

Encourage member railroads to establish rules that require enginecrews to communicate fixed signal aspects to conductors while trains are en route on signalized track. (R-81-48)

Similar recommendations have been made to individual railroads. None of the recommendation recipients has concurred in the recommendations. The Safety Board maintains its position that such a requirement would enable the conductor to better monitor the performance of the enginecrew and consequently the handling of the train. Likewise, it would serve to keep the rear crew alert. After exchanges of correspondence, the Board decided that future dialogue on this subject would not convince the AAR that the Board's position has merit. Consequently, the Board placed recommendation R-81-48 in a "Closed--Unacceptable Action" status on December 30, 1982.

As a result of its investigation of this accident, and based on a firm belief in the merit of the recommendations addressing the passing of wayside signal aspects from the head-end crew to the rear-end crew, the Safety Board is reissuing herein the procedures outlined in its previous recommendations in a new recommendation to the AAR.

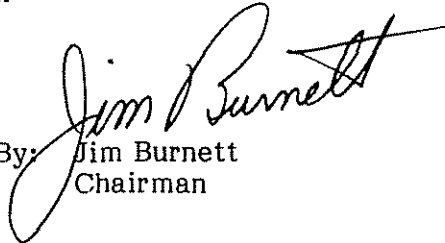
Therefore, the National Transportation Safety Board recommends that the Association of American Railroads:

2/ Railroad Accident Report--"Head-on Collision of Two Penn Central Transportation Company Freight Trains near Pettisville, Ohio, February 4, 1976" (NTSB-RAR-76-10).

3/ Railroad Accident Report--"Rear-End Collision of Union Pacific Railroad Company Freight Trains, near Hermosa, Wyoming, October 16, 1980" (NTSB-RAR-81-3).

Encourage member railroads to develop and implement rules that will require enginecrews to communicate to the rear crews the aspects displayed by all wayside signals governing the progress of the train, irrespective of the signal indication. (Class II, Priority Action)  
(R-84-32)

BURNETT, Chairman, GOLDMAN, Vice Chairman, and BURSLEY and GROSE, Members, concurred in this recommendation.

  
By: Jim Burnett  
Chairman