

Log # - 579



National Transportation Safety Board

Washington, D.C. 20594

Safety Recommendation

Date: MAY 30 1995

In Reply Refer To: H-95-7

Mr. Francis Francois
Executive Director
American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials
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Washington, DC 20001

On November 30, 1993, a 184-foot-long vehicle operated by Rountree Transport and Rigging (Rountree), Inc., was en route to deliver an 82-ton turbine to a Kissimmee Utility Authority (KUA) electricity generating plant under construction near Intercession City, Florida. The private access road to the plant facility crosses over a single railroad track owned by CSX Transportation, Inc. (CSXT). Because of the configuration of the truck and the profile of the roadway, the cargo deck of the vehicle began to bottom out on the roadway surface as it moved across the tracks. The Rountree crew proceeded to adjust the height of cargo deck to gain greater clearance while the vehicle straddled the tracks. They had finished raising the cargo deck and were preparing to move the vehicle when the lights and bells at the grade crossing activated. Seconds later, National Railroad Passenger Corporation (Amtrak) train number 88, the Silver Meteor, carrying 89 passengers, struck the side of the cargo deck and the turbine. The locomotive and the first four cars of the eight-car consist derailed, carrying the turbine and parts of the Rountree vehicle with them.¹

The Rountree vehicle and the turbine were destroyed, and the locomotive and the first three railcars were damaged extensively. Total damage from the accident exceeded \$14 million. No deaths resulted from this accident. Six persons sustained serious injuries and 53 persons suffered minor injuries, and had to be evacuated to area hospitals.

¹ For additional information, read Highway Accident Report--Collision of Amtrak Train No. 88 with Rountree Transport and Rigging, Inc., Vehicle on CSX Transportation, Inc., Railroad near Intercession City, Florida, November 30, 1993 (NTSB/HAR-95/01).

From its investigation, the Safety Board found that the cause of the accident was the vehicle operator's failure to notify CSXT in advance of its intent to cross the railroad track at the accident grade crossing and to ensure through CSXT that it was safe to do so. The Safety Board identified problems in Florida permitting requirements and procedures, Rountree's oversight of oversize moves, and move coordination between the railroad and highway carriers.

The State of Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) requires oversize/low-clearance vehicle operators to obtain pretrip route approval. The focus of the State permitting process is on determining the potential load impact on highway structures along the route. Florida also has a regulation based on the Uniform Vehicle Code that requires operators of certain types of highway vehicles with low ground clearance to notify railroads of each intended crossing at grade. Neither the railroad carrier nor highway carrier involved in this accident were aware of this requirement. When approving oversize moves, the FDOT has no procedure for either advising or requiring applicants to provide railroads with advance notification of the intent to travel over grade crossings.

From interviews with other individuals, the Safety Board learned that the Rountree regional manager reportedly implied that he felt the small amount of time it took his vehicle to cross over tracks did not warrant having a flagman. This would indicate that the Rountree regional manager did not have a real appreciation for the hazards involved at grade crossings. On this move and on several trips preceding the Intercession City move, Rountree arranged to have CSXT flag crossings only in the immediate Tampa area. In the case of the Intercession City trip, this meant that CSXT personnel protected only 8 of 13 crossings. Without a flagman, Rountree lost the direct coordination with CSXT necessary to provide safe passage over all five unflagged crossings.

The Safety Board believes that the Uniform Vehicle Code should be revised to require that State agencies advise oversize/low-clearance carriers of the requirement to notify railroad carriers of intended moves at railroad grade crossings. Further, the Safety Board believes that State highway and transportation officials should enact provisions making railroad notification a condition of oversize vehicle permitting when applicable.

The National Transportation Safety Board therefore makes the following recommendation to the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials--

Inform your members of the facts and circumstances of the Intercession City, Florida, accident, and urge that they require operators of low clearance, overdimension/overweight vehicles to provide railroads with advance notification of travel over grade crossings. Further, recommend that these members revise their permit document to state that compliance with this notification requirement is a condition of permitting. (Class II, Priority Action) (H-95-7)

Also, the Safety Board issued Safety Recommendations P-95-31 to the American Gas Association, P-95-32 to the Interstate Natural Gas Association of America, P-95-33 to the American Public Gas Association, P-95-34 to the American Petroleum Institute, P-95-35 to the Central Florida Pipeline Corporation, P-95-36 to the State of Florida Division of Emergency Management, R-95-24 and -25 to the Association of American Railroads, R-95-26 and -27 to the American Short Line Railroad Association, R-95-28 to the National Railroad Passenger Corporation, R-95-29 to the Osceola County (Florida) Emergency Management Division, R-95-30 through -32 to the CSX Transportation Corporation, H-95-8 and -9 to the Specialized Carriers and Rigging Association, H-95-10 to the International Association of Chiefs of Police, H-95-11 to the National Sheriffs' Association, and H-95-12 to the National Committee on Uniform Traffic Laws and Ordinances.

The National Transportation Safety Board is an independent Federal agency with the statutory responsibility "to promote transportation safety by conducting independent accident investigations and by formulating safety improvement recommendations" (Public Law 93-633). The Safety Board is interested in any action taken as a result of its safety recommendations. Therefore, it would appreciate a response from you regarding action taken or contemplated with respect to the recommendation in this letter. Please refer to Safety Recommendation H-95-7.

Chairman HALL, Vice Chairman FRANCIS, and Member HAMMERSCHMIDT concurred in this recommendation.

By 
James E. Hall
Chairman