



Log
R-653B

National Transportation Safety Board
Washington, D.C. 20594

Safety Recommendation

Date: MAY 30 1995

In Reply Refer To: R-95-28

Mr. Thomas M. Downs
Chairman and President
National Railroad Passenger Corporation
60 Massachusetts Ave. NE
Washington, DC 20002

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 bottomed 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. As they finished raising the cargo deck, 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 of this accident, the Safety Board identified several safety issues, including weld deficiencies in the seat supports in the Amtrak Heritage lounge car. At the time of the accident, 12:40 p.m., 18 to 20 people were in the lounge. Most passengers in the lounge car sustained minor injuries when they were thrown into car tables/seats and at least two lounge car passengers were injured when they were struck by displaced pedestal seats.

During the postaccident on-scene investigation, the Safety Board found four pedestal seats broken from their bases and five tables bent toward the front of the train. Investigators found that the pedestal seats had separated at the weld area that connects the pedestal to the base. Amtrak's General Manager of Mechanical Standards and Compliances later stated that the pedestal seat should have collapsed or buckled along the pedestal support rather than separating from the base.

Had the pedestal seats collapsed or buckled along the pedestal support column, the potential for injury would have been reduced. The Safety Board concludes that separation at the weld connecting the base and column of the pedestal seats in the lounge car contributed to passenger injuries.

In a letter dated April 13, 1995, Amtrak advised the Safety Board that it anticipates that all Heritage lounge cars will be out of service in the first quarter of 1996. The Safety Board believes that as an interim measure, Amtrak should inspect all Heritage lounge cars still in service to identify and correct weld deficiencies in the pedestal seat floor attachment. Further, should lounge cars be refurbished before being retired, Amtrak should modify the pedestal seats to mitigate passenger injuries.

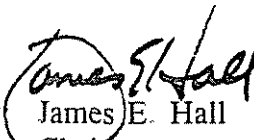
Therefore, the National Transportation Safety Board recommends that the National Railroad Passenger Corporation--

Inspect all Heritage lounge cars still in service to identify and correct separation problems between the base and pedestal column of the pedestal seat. Should lounge cars be refurbished before being retired, modify the pedestal seats to mitigate passenger injuries. (Class II, Priority Action) (R-95-28)

Also, the Safety Board issued Safety Recommendations H-95-7 to the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials, 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, H-95-12 to the National Committee on Uniform Traffic Laws and Ordinances, 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-95-29 to the Osceola County (Florida) Emergency Management Division, and R-95-30 through -32 to the CSX Transportation Corporation.

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 R-95-28.

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

By 
James E. Hall
Chairman